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By Guglielmo Ferrero

The Greatness and Decline of Rome

In Five Volumes

Characters and Events in Roman History

From Cæsar to Nero (60 B.C.–70 A.D.)

Ancient Rome and Modern America

A Comparative Study of Morals and Manners

Between the Old World and the New

A Moral and Philosophical Contrast

BETWEEN THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW

A MORAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONTRAST

BY

GUGLIELMO FERRERO

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TRANSLATED BY

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PREFACE

EMILIO MITRE, Baron di Rio Branco, Theodore Roosevelt,—these three names I must inscribe on the first page of this volume. On three fond memories my thoughts dwell with a tenderness not unmixed with melancholy, as I send this book forth to its fate. The first, Paris and the eve of the day fixed for the conclusion of my course on the Michonnis Foundation at the Collège de France—the evening of November 29, 1906, when Emilio Mitre unexpectedly came to see me, and asked me to undertake the long voyage to Argentina in his name and in that of the *Nation*, the great Buenos Aires newspaper. Next, the evening of June 24, 1907, when a deputation representing the Brazilian Academy, sent by Baron di Rio Branco, Minister of Foreign Affairs for Brazil, and headed by Giuseppe Graça Aranha, met the *Cordova* in the wonderful bay of Rio de Janeiro, to do my wife and myself the honours of the city, and to invite us to visit Brazil on our way back. Lastly, the day in February, 1908, on which the New World offered me a third surprise no less welcome than the other two, in the shape of an invitation from Theodore Roosevelt, communicated to me in flattering words by Baron Mayor des Planches.

I should feel much indebted to these three persons—especially to Emilio Mitre, because he was the first—even if they had only made two long voyages easy for

me, and shown me much courtesy and hospitality. But they rendered me a much greater service. They uprooted me from the ancient world, in which I had shut myself up for the past ten years, and plunged me headlong into the wild turmoil of the two Americas. If life is the school whose doors are never closed nor its courses suspended for the student whose ambition it is to learn without intermission and to improve, this great experience could not have come at a happier or more profitable moment for me. I could not find my bearings at first. Then, as from the depths of the Argentine Pampas, from the lofty table-land of São Paulo, from the huge industrial cities of North America, I let my thoughts travel back to the Rome of Cæsar and Augustus, I measured the long road traversed by mankind in the course of twenty centuries. How vast is the world at the present day compared with that little Mediterranean basin to whose shores civilisation was for so long confined! How feeble and timid does the human race appear, even at the most glorious epochs of the past, in comparison with the formidable powers now at our disposal! And yet . . . Why is it that, at the height of his power, man is still discontented and restless? Why need he pretend to despise the vast riches, of which he is yet so greedy and so proud, and to admire and envy that old civilisation which it is more than likely that he cannot understand? Why is every object on which the dust of a century or two has settled venerated to-day like a sacred relic? Why, while the European, thirsting for gold, turns his back with a curse on the old world, does the American, satiated with gold, bend his steps towards it, as if in search of something which his immense riches cannot by themselves give him? What means the strange

and incessant coming and going over the Atlantic; the restless stream from continent to continent, neither of which can apparently exist by itself any longer, nor yet merge itself completely in the other?

How often, as I travelled through the two Americas, have my thoughts flown back to that ancient civilisation which had been to me for so many years the object of study and research! Until at last, as I scanned the two worlds in my thoughts, the truth dawned upon me, and I realised what a mighty upheaval America had wrought in the history of the world, as she rose in the ocean to meet the eyes of the restless Genoese explorer. A small upheaval at first, which grew gradually with the centuries, with the discoveries of science and invention, with the triumph of liberty and the accumulation of riches: a fierce struggle between quantity and quality, between the force which impels men to ignore established limits and conquer the world and its treasures, and the need natural to mankind of limits which will support him in distinguishing clearly Right, Truth, and Beauty. I bethought me of the dazzling accumulation of treasures, and the doubt and confusion in the minds of men which are now assailing the beliefs, the tastes, the opinions which the ancients toiled to make more clear and more precise: the rapid growth of a world without limits, and therefore without supports, in which man advances like a giant who totters at every step!

Musing thus, I conceived the idea of representing this conflict between the two worlds—not between Europe and America only, but between the ancient limited civilisations still surviving in so many traditions, and the aspirations, the ambitions, and the passions of this new civilisation which aims at

sweeping away all limits—by reviving an ancient literary form.

This book is not a romance, a volume of travel, or a drama, nor is it a treatise of philosophy or of sociology. It is a dialogue. Ernest Renan has said that this literary form, so dear to the ancients, the chosen instrument of Plato and of Galileo, is exactly conceived for the treatment of the questions to which the human mind turns and turns again, but can never find the solution. But I am conscious that dialogue, like so many other things of beauty, is to-day like a plant nipped by the frosts of winter. Am I rash in hoping that it may blossom again?

At any rate it will console me to think that I have been able at least to portray in this ancient setting one of the most amiable and admirable men I have met. Among the fictitious characters of this dialogue, Emilio Rosetti is real. His names are real, the story he tells is real, so are most of his speeches. A man of rare talent and accomplishments, of refined tastes and an eager searcher after knowledge, he could have eclipsed many whose names shine with greater lustre, if he had not consistently followed that great rule of ancient common-sense which bids a man limit his desires and his attempts to less than he can acquire and accomplish. No one then better than he could understand and explain the philosophy of the "limits" in which our long discussions culminated.

And so closes the long parenthesis in my life and studies introduced by Emilio Mitre, with his invitation of November 29, 1906. For me the joy of having finished a long and difficult task is embittered by the thought that neither to Emilio Mitre nor to Baron di Rio Branco can I send this volume as a small token

of my gratitude. But I rejoice that we still have in Theodore Roosevelt a living and admirable example of that untiring keenness and robust self-confidence which are among the particular virtues of the American people. To him at least may this book find its way, and tell him how sensible I am and always shall be of his kindness, of the generous hospitality of the two Americas, of the many things they have taught me, and of the numberless acts of courtesy of which I have been the recipient.

GUGLIELMO FERRERO.

March, 1913.

BETWEEN THE TWO WORLDS

PART I

CHAPTER I

ONE by one the launches, which had for two hours been buzzing round the *Cordova*, steamed away, and she lay awhile alone at anchor in the bay of Rio de Janeiro. Standing on the bridge, whence the captain, Cavaliere Federico Mombello, had invited my wife Gina and myself to say our last farewell to the city, I gazed for the last time, while I waited for the ship to weigh anchor, at the clear blue chain of the Serras Tinguà, da Estrella, and dos Orgãos, which encloses the bay to the north; at the rugged mass of points, pinnacles, and obelisks which crowns them; at the sunlit festoon of big white clouds shed round their slopes on that lovely spring afternoon. The moment was to me one of mingled joy and regret. Farewell, a long farewell to the two Americas which I had twice visited, to the vast world which I had entered with such eager curiosity, which I had traversed with such ardour, where I had experienced so many new sensations. At the hour of departure those hundred mountains with their thousand peaks seemed to lose substance and weight, to melt at the touch of the dazzling white

clouds into a whole of resplendent brightness; as if America, after spreading before my eyes all the splendours which nature or man can offer, would fain dazzle me with one last scene of brilliant light and cloud.

Bells and whistles sounded. Almost imperceptibly on the starboard hand the shore on which lies Rio de Janeiro began to move. It was exactly five o'clock. Farewell, America, farewell for ever! I gazed forward, and saw a vast basin, bathed in sunlight, open out before me. It was the vestibule of the bay towards the ocean, a blue lake, shut in on the east as on the west by dark green mountains thickly covered with dense forests. Oppressed by the relentless flight of our last few minutes, we let our eyes dwell on the huge basin, greedily drinking in for the last time the matchless beauty of the scene. To the east, at the foot of the wall of green mountains, stretched the glorious coast of Icarahy, on which we, with Graça Aranha, had spent a delightful afternoon, refreshed by the odours wafted to us by the wind from the neighbouring forests. On every side of the bay, wooded islands and islets peeped up and hid themselves again, one behind the other, like huge floating bushes, or the tops of an immense submerged forest. To the west rose the green mountain wall, with the sharp peak of Corcovado in the middle pointing abruptly to the sky. At its foot, Rio! City crowned with palms and the relics of secular forest, which dips her feet in the sea and rests her head on the mountain amidst the woods; the last of the great American capitals I had visited on the shores of the North and South Atlantic. My thoughts flew back at that moment to New York, to the city which, chafing at the inelasticity of its bounds, piles storey upon storey as though seeking to scale the skies.

Then again I thought of wealthy Buenos Aires, lying uncramped and at ease in the immense plain, her numberless houses, one-storied in the Roman style, spreading wide in straight interminable streets, like a living and boundless Pompeii. How different from both was the metropolis which I watched from the *Cordova*, unrolling itself on the seashore and on the hill! —the city which reposes in the forests of the bay, and uses her more imposing features as a fan against the scorching heat of the sun; whose foundations are enlaced with the roots of hoary trees as it were with giant ivy!

Meanwhile the *Cordova* steamed ever faster towards the opening of the bay, opposite the tall mountains at its lower end, which were gradually recovering substance and weight in the fading light. We saw for the last time Botafogo and the great grey chasm in the green mountain which overhangs it. Then mountains of strange and horrid shapes drew near us: the Sugar Loaf Rock, that monstrous sentinel with green-clad body and bald black head; beyond the Sugar Loaf Rock the Great Gull, its humps resembling those of a gigantic dromedary. Rio, already half in shadow, began to fade away as if foreshortened. . . . Farewell, farewell for ever to the only city in the world whose streets are refreshed by the forest, to the sweet odours that fill her houses in the morning, to the shadows that invite the hurrying passer-by to meditation, to the burning rage and furious threats of the lowering cyclones, to the torrential rains that quicken the city's youth and refresh her languor, to the sylvan silence that broods undisturbed over the deserted streets at midday, to the sweet whispers gently murmured roof-high from tree-top to tree-top!

But the *Cordova* had already reached the entrance to the bay, and like some tiny insect was skirting the base of the huge wall of the Sugar Loaf Rock. I gazed forward where already the ocean could be descried, ready to support us on its mighty shoulders and carry us to our destination. But between us and the ocean were interposed strange and horrid monsters, islands, islets, and rocks cowering like wild beasts at the entrance to the harbour. As we threaded our way amongst them, I turned aft for one last glimpse of America, and, as the ship gradually drew away from the shore, I saw protrude from the water strange forms of animals, manes, muzzles and horns roughly sketched in the rude substance of the mountains, islands, and rocks. We had now reached the other side of the Sugar Loaf Rock and could see the "Giant Rock" descried by the earliest navigators. To right and to left of it a black wall of rock loomed through the golden halo shed round it by the sun, detached, precipitous, bristling with sharp points and jagged excrescences, cleft here and there by enormous chasms in which the ocean surged—a rampart of granite which seemed to swarm with antediluvian animals, fantastic beasts, and monsters, now single, now in twos, threes, and fours. But the ship kept increasing her speed and the sun sank in the west; gradually the rocks, the islands, and the monsters were blended and blurred into a black wall, in which the entrance to the bay could be discerned only with difficulty. . . . The supreme, irrevocable instant was at hand! I cast my eyes forward once more. The horizon was suffused with the clear red glow of evening, towards which the ship sped with the full power of her propellers, but without hurry, with equal, rhythmic pulse, her bows heaving

from time to time like a horse tossing its head at the feel of the bit. She had once more found her way to the vast plain of waters and was pointing resolutely towards the distant goal. The supreme, irrevocable instant had passed! Of all the things we had seen, experienced, and enjoyed, of America in fact, all that remained to us was the pale image of a memory!

CHAPTER II

"IT is the most beautiful city in the world, the model for the cities of the future, the 'Urbs' of the twentieth century. . . ."

This is the opinion expressed one hour later at dinner, in the middle of an animated conversation, by the lawyer Arnaldo Alverighi, referring to New York.

The tables in the dining-room of the *Cordova* were arranged in three rows; a long table in the middle at the head of which sat the captain, and five small tables to starboard and five to port, with seats at each for five persons. At the middle table, where the captain had assigned to me the second seat on his left,—the first was reserved for my wife who had stayed on deck,—I had found myself that evening among several friends from Brazil and Argentina. In the first seat to the right of the captain sat Admiral José Maria Guimarães, a shrewd, keen-looking man of about sixty-five years of age, who had been sent by the Brazilian Government to Europe to buy ships and guns. The second seat was empty, but the third was occupied by a cultured diplomat from Brazil, bearing the fine old Florentine name of Cavalcanti. Next to him came Emilio Rosetti, an engineer, and last of all, in the fourth seat on my side (the third was reserved for my boy, who had already gone to bed), Arnaldo Alverighi, the lawyer. Rosetti, who was returning from Buenos

Aires, was an old and dear friend of mine from Milan; Alverighi I had known at Rosario, Guimarães and Cavalcanti at Rio. In due course I introduced Rosetti and Alverighi, who came from Buenos Aires, to the two Brazilians, who had come aboard with me a few hours earlier at Rio. It was not long before all four of them—or rather, all five, for the captain joined in—pressed me to recount the incidents of my long journey. So we discussed Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, and afterwards passed to the other hemisphere, my impressions of which the others were even more curious to hear. Had I seen the fabulous riches of the north? Its huge cities and their indescribable activities? Its Titans, Demigods, and Demons of commerce, finance, and industry? Finally, our talk brought us to the American metropolis, which Alverighi, Cavalcanti, the Admiral, and Rosetti had all seen. But at this point, a heated discussion arose between Alverighi, who admired New York, and the others, who did not. We discussed somewhat noisily the question whether New York was a beautiful or an ugly city. At last, Alverighi, in a defiant tone, proclaimed New York to be the most beautiful of modern cities.

"Now we 're in for it!" thought I. "What a captious fellow he is!" Not that I, like the others, felt any surprise. I knew Alverighi, and I did not doubt that he was speaking quite seriously. Not so the others. Rosetti turned to me with a smile, the Admiral scrutinised the speaker's face to see if he were in earnest, the captain leaned towards me and whispered, "Is n't that rather too strong?" But they none of them knew for certain whether the lawyer was serious or not; so nobody answered. Alverighi did not leave them long in doubt.

"A European," said he, "cannot understand New York. New York is the stomach of America, which digests the filth and the offscourings of the universe and turns them into the purest blood for the nourishment of a continent. . . ."

At this moment, a lady appeared at the door. She was dressed in a gorgeous dark-blue gown, with bare arms, and shoulders draped in a sky-blue scarf reaching below the waist. The head steward hastened towards her and conducted her to the empty seat between the Admiral and Cavalcanti. These two rose and bowed, and made way for her to take her seat. The rest of the company, who were not in evening dress and were not expecting the apparition of a gorgeous toilette and bare arms in our humble dining-saloon, were somewhat overcome, and stopped eating and talking to look at her. She was still young—thirty-five years I should have given her at a glance—with a small, oval face, bright, laughing eyes, fine black eyebrows, and a small shapely nose and mouth. Apparently unconscious of the sensation her entrance had made, she threw back her scarf, displaying her arms and shoulders, and a magnificent string of pearls, and bowed to each of us with a smile, as the Admiral introduced us to her, mentioning a name I could not catch; then, without more ado, fell to on the plate of soup which had been put before her.

After this short interruption, the rattle of knives and forks began again, and eyes and tongues were busy as before. At our table, it was not Alverighi, who was somewhat abashed by the fair unknown, but the Admiral, obviously a friend of hers, who took up the thread of the conversation. Up to this point, we had talked in Italian, which the two Brazilians spoke fluently. But

now the Admiral, with a meaning and rather malicious smile, said in French:

"Do you know what we were talking about, Mrs. Feldmann? Guess! About New York. This gentleman"—indicating Alverighi—"was proving to us that New York is the most beautiful city in the world. Fancy!—in the world!"

"New York?"—she cried, in a tone of surprise. "New York?"

And she burst into a merry laugh.

I watched Alverighi out of the corner of my eye, and saw his face cloud over. But the Admiral went on with an innocent air:

"Apparently you, who have lived there for so many years, are not of the same opinion?"

"Really, Admiral," she protested, drawing her scarf over her shoulders, "you must know that I have a horror of everything that lacks harmony and proportion."

This remark brought Alverighi to the front again.

"Quite true," he said. "In New York, you have the Babel of architecture. In it you have Asia and Europe, paganism and Christianity, thirty centuries resolved into their elements and put together again capriciously by a genius at once fantastic and sublime. That is just the reason why I adore New York. Harmony and proportion are the æsthetics of decrepit civilisations. Life itself is rough, rugged, unequal, and violent, like New York. The European, dazzled, befogged, cannot find his bearings in it. Alarmed, he asks: 'Where am I? In Greece? In Paris? In Nuremberg? In Bagdad? At the beginning of the twentieth century, in the times of the Normans, in the reign of the Pharaohs? In a real city, or in an astral city, built

in the planet Mars or in some other planet by beings of different clay, more intelligent and more powerful than ourselves?'"

Mrs. Feldmann, engaged at the moment in arranging the folds of her scarf, did not answer. Cavalcanti replied instead. No one could any longer doubt that the lawyer was speaking seriously; but that was not enough to deter his listeners from poking a little fun at his thesis. As a matter of fact it struck me that Cavalcanti's insidious questions were expressly meant to give a fillip to the other's paradoxical enthusiasm.

"You think, then," said he, "that harmony and proportion are the æsthetics of decrepit peoples. What about Greek tragedy, then?"

"Good enough for a puppet show," replied Alverighi, without a moment's hesitation.

"Really!" cried Cavalcanti, as if nonplussed, and subsided for a moment; then added: "What about Greek sculpture?"

"Greek sculpture?" cried Alverighi, suddenly flaring up. "Well, what about it? Why, you have only to go to a museum, and you need not be a professor of archæology to realise that Greek sculpture is a sensual art, which flourished at a time when beautiful women, or handsome men, were as scarce as strawberries at Christmas."

"But I thought," interposed Mrs. Feldmann, "that the Greeks allowed their eyes to dwell on forms of extreme beauty only, and that that was how they educated the public taste."

"If they had had plenty of fair women in flesh and bone," replied the lawyer, "the Greeks would not have made so many in marble. No: Greek sculpture is a sensual art."

Every remark of the lawyer's was more startling than the last, and the others were obviously undecided whether to take the fellow seriously, ridicule him, or take offence at him. I alone, who knew him, felt neither surprise nor offence; in fact, all the time he was talking, I was racking my brains to find the answer to a different question. Who could the unknown lady opposite me be? I watched her as she kept covering and uncovering her shapely shoulders, her eyes and smile betraying the interest she took in our conversation.

She was certainly richly dressed, and she was apparently travelling alone; but she was not an actress, I was sure of that. She seemed to know the Admiral well, but his manner towards her was paternal and quite free from suspicion; in fact, what one would expect from their respective ages. She had probably come aboard at Rio, but the Admiral was my authority for knowing that she had lived a long time at New York. For the rest, I should have thought from her accent and manners that she was French. Judging by her pearls and her dress, so much more elaborate than that of the other passengers, I should have supposed her to be very rich. Who could she be? I could not imagine. Meanwhile, Cavalcanti continued to tease the lawyer.

"To come now to modern times, what does 'æsthetics' teach nations who are not decrepit to think of Paris?"

We all expected some new heresy. But no. . . . Maybe Alverighi saw that Cavalcanti was bent on driving him from paradox to paradox into a corner; or perhaps he did not feel himself equal to sustaining his thesis, if he went any further. Anyhow, he suddenly went off on another tack.

"Goodness gracious! Do you think that I 'm a

European professor? I 'm only a poor Argentine proprietor, and a terribly busy one at that. Two farms in the province of Buenos Aires, and three in the province of Santa Fé to get into working order. A couple of hundred thousand acres in the province of Mendoza to irrigate. A property in Paraguay as big as an Italian province to make something of, or, if the worst comes to the worst, to sell for double what I gave for it. . . . Not to mention debts of three millions to pay: three millions, not a dollar less! So don't ask me what is beautiful and what is ugly, because for me the Beautiful is what pleases me, the Ugly what displeases me. New York pleases me. Accordingly I maintain that it is the most beautiful city in the world, and defy you to prove the contrary. What authority, what dogma, what principle can you invoke against me? Nowadays there 's not an individual who has not made good his right to put his own price on kings and to settle accounts with Providence itself. I should like to see the man who would challenge my absolute right to proclaim what pleases me to be beautiful. *Allons donc!*"

We all, including myself, sat with our eyes fixed on Alverighi's face, with its square forehead, surmounted by close-cut black hair, keen, prominent eyes, and red cheeks surrounded with carefully-trimmed black whiskers and pointed beard. I, who knew him, could read in his strong, shrewd, quizzical face, which reminded me of the figures in an Etruscan painting, that he was speaking seriously under the influence of a profound, though peculiar, conviction. But I could see from their faces that my companions were convinced that Alverighi was either raving, or making fun of them, even though not one of them, not even Cavalcanti,

was quite sure about it. Anyhow, Cavalcanti did not retaliate with a frontal attack, but with a flank movement, executed with some hesitation.

"Quite true . . . if it be granted that a taste for harmony and proportion is a sign of senility, it is difficult to prove that New York is ugly. But the assumption seems to me rather a bold one. I may be decrepit myself, but I cannot help thinking that not only you, Mrs. Feldmann, but every one else, is naturally disposed to admire whatever is harmonious, light, and symmetrical, and to dislike whatever is heavy, unsymmetrical, and disordered."

"Do you really think so?" cried Alverighi, in a tone of defiance.

"Of course. Possibly in many cases this instinct may be blunted or perverted; but it is always there."

Alverighi was about to reply, when Mrs. Feldmann, who had been occupied arranging the rings on her fingers, and perhaps had not heard the last remarks, interrupted them both, saying to Alverighi:

"I, like Signor Cavalcanti, should like to hear your opinion of Paris."

"Paris is an archæological city, the cemetery of the decrepit civilisations of Europe."

"Paris?" cried Mrs. Feldmann, "Paris? I suppose, because it has not yet occurred to the Parisians to turn Arab mosques into cafés and Gothic cathedrals into restaurants!"

"So much the worse for the Parisians."

"If Paris is a cemetery, your New York is a blasphemy. Only barbarians could have been guilty of such profanation of religious architecture."

"But," retorted Alverighi, "have you ever felt any repugnance at dining in Europe under the roof of some

sham Chinese pagoda, like the 'Pavillon Chinois' in the Bois de Boulogne, for instance? Because that is just as much a profanation. You may tell me that Chinese architecture is to us an exotic, that we do not feel that a pagoda is a temple. Quite true: by the same token, the true American is at liberty to secularise certain styles of European religious architecture."

"But China has not discovered, populated, and civilised Europe, as is the case with Europe and America," said a new harsh voice. It was Doctor Montanari, the Government Commissary for Emigration, who had come in in the middle of dinner and taken the seat next Rosetti.

Alverighi turned towards him, saying in his usual decided way:

"Oh, that 's all ancient history—out of date nowadays!"

"It may be, for you," retorted the doctor, stubbornly; "it is n't for us. It suits the American book to throw overboard the load of gratitude they owe to Europe."

The discussion began to grow heated, and there were signs of a storm to come. But dinner was over, and the captain chose this moment to rise from his seat. Mrs. Feldmann and the Admiral exchanged a glance, and rose from the table. So the discussion was broken off, and we all, one by one, rose and left the room.

CHAPTER III

AFTER a look at my belongings I took a turn on deck, and then went to the smoking-room, with the deliberate intention of finding out all I could about the mysterious lady. I found Dr. Montanari, Cavalcanti, and Rosetti sitting at a table. It seemed that Alverighi had put even Mrs. Feldmann in the shade for that evening, for they were all discussing him.

"He 's been laying down the law now for four whole days," grumbled the doctor. "He 's done nothing else since we started. And he 's always gassing about his millions. *Cose da pazzi!* If he goes on, I shall dine in my cabin."

"Why?" answered Cavalcanti with a quiet smile. "To me he 's a regular curiosity. You know him, don't you, Ferrero?"

Cavalcanti's amusement and Montanari's fury were no surprise to me, who knew them both. Notwithstanding his fine Tuscan name, Cavalcanti was a native of what one might call the India of Brazil, a northern province close to the equator, and a scion of an old and distinguished, but impoverished, house. He was by nature disposed to a life of contemplation rather than of action. He had on the one hand a profound horror of the many-sided and untiring activity which in temperate climates has given birth to modern civilisation, and on the other an acute sensitiveness and a

wonderful gift of intuition. These qualities combined to make of him something between a poet and a philosopher, free from jealousy, pride, and combativeness, simple and kind, keenly interested in everything, and with a distinct bent towards mysticism.

Contact with the hurly-burly of modern civilisation in Rio had left him unspoiled. A pupil of the great Machado de Assis in literature and of Baron di Rio Branco in diplomacy, he had given vent in literature to his speculative tendencies, and had acquired at the same time some practical knowledge of the world. Consequently, at thirty-eight years of age, he, like his great friend Graça Aranha, had already won himself an important place among the men of his generation. At that age he had already been sent across the Atlantic on several important missions. He was now coming to Italy to take up the post of first secretary of the Brazilian legation at the Quirinal. His famous novel, *The Promised Land*, had secured him a place amongst the most celebrated Brazilian authors of the younger generation. His charitable disposition had been accentuated by what I may call the eclectic broad-mindedness distinctive of American culture. How often at Rio, in the gigantic Garnier Library, that great estuary through which both the main streams and the smaller tributaries of the river of universal culture discharge themselves over Brazil,—how often had I marvelled at the rich eclecticism of Brazilian culture, as I chatted at tea time with José Verissimo, João Ribeiro, Araripe, Oliveira da Lima, Machado de Assis, Graça Aranha, Souza Bandeira, and the rest of the Brazilian Academy, in the vast hall at the foot of the towering bookcases filled with books brought by the latest steamers from Europe, while baskets filled

with volumes were being lowered from the galleries ranged one above the other along the walls! Novelists, poets, critics, historians, they joined in admiring the classics and romanticism, Greek and Russian literature, Plato and Frederick Nietzsche, Sophocles and Ibsen. Cavalcanti, not less eclectic and broad-minded than these, was not the man to feel more than a passing irritation at the heresies and exaggerations of Alverighi; rather did they excite him to study such an original, and to extract from him what information and, perhaps, amusement he could. More than one of Alverighi's remarks had brought a smile to his lips; but it was a charitable smile, with but a dash of irony, and entirely free from malice.

Montanari was quite a different type of man. I had made his acquaintance on my voyage out. He was Romagnol, from Faenza if I remember rightly, and an army surgeon; a patriot and a monarchist in the way that old people in Romagna—for even Romagna is being modernised—used once upon a time to be monarchists or republicans, patriots or internationalists, with all the intensity of Guelphs and Ghibellines come to life again. But it was just those views that made him feel a comprehensive disgust of things in general. He felt the progressive decadence of monarchy in our times like a personal disaster. He still, after so many years, shuddered at the recollection of an American anarchist's dastardly attempt to do violence to the King of Italy. To him the powerful impulse which yearly drives so many men of old Europe to cross the ocean represented nothing more than the wide-spread perversion and deep-rooted perfidy of an entire people. When he spoke of the vices, the ignorance, the misfortunes, the incessant ebb and flow of the tide of

emigration, his tone was one of harshness which many thought inhuman; just as not a few saw in his upright, stiff, military bearing, in the straight look of his eyes, in the sardonic smile which played on his thin clean-shaven face, and in the contemptuous silence with which he would often answer another's arguments, the challenge of an insolent pride. But they were wrong. His disposition was neither hard nor haughty, but soured; soured by the cynical indifference with which the present generation suffer dust and mildew to lay hold of the sacred images of authority on earth and in heaven. And he loathed America. By way of venting his hatred of the new world, he stormed against the old world as well; against Italy, which he loved nevertheless above every other thing; against Europe, to which however, by contrast with America at any rate, he paid a certain amount of respect; against the crowds whom he accompanied in their wanderings from one continent to the other, shouting and cursing at them, and repeating his three favourite words,—an interjection learned at Naples and the synthesis of the whole of his philosophy of life,—"*Cose da pazzi!*" yet all the time zealously doing all he could in their behalf.

It was natural that a man of this sort should have taken an aversion to Alverighi. But I knew the glib lawyer a little, and gladly accepted Cavalcanti's invitation to join in the discussion about him.

"Yes, I made his acquaintance in Rosario," I answered. "He was our cicerone for three days. He is an Italian from Mantua, who has made a large fortune in a few years in Argentina."

"Steady on——" interrupted the doctor.

"Steady yourself, Doctor; don't make up your mind

too quickly. Do you know his history? You don't? Well, guess what career his people in Italy meant him for. . . . They wanted to make a philosopher of him! Actually, a philosopher. His father was a very intelligent and well-educated man, the author of several historical works of merit, but poor and over-burdened with children. The son took his doctor's degree at twenty-two years of age in some university, I can't remember which, with a thesis on Descartes and Spinoza; and three months later sailed for Buenos Aires."

"That was a strange thing for a philosopher to do," observed Cavalcanti.

"According to his own story," I continued, "it was one of his professors who persuaded him to it, an old philosopher with a great admiration for America, though he only knew it on the map. Night and morning, he hammered it into him that he had too much ability for a professor in Europe, that there was too much philosophy and too much Latin in Europe and too little in America; until at last by dint of constant repetition this rather unwise old wiseacre succeeded in persuading him to take the plunge. One fine morning, our young friend sailed from Genoa on his way to sow the ancient cultivation of Europe in the virgin soil of America. I need not stop to tell you how the philosopher fared when he first landed twenty or five and twenty years ago at Buenos Aires with a few thousand francs in his pocket."

"It 's only too true," said Rosetti sadly, "that an education *de luxe* is no capital to tempt fortune with in America. That 's what Europeans will not understand."

"But Alverighi," I continued, "was a man. In the hour of danger he realised that the anchor of salvation

in the great storms of life at the present day is . . . clothes! Not even Dante or Galileo would get any one to help them nowadays, if they showed themselves without a linen collar and with only one pair of cobbled shoes apiece. So he ate dry bread, and drank water from the spring; but he was always smartly dressed in public. In a word, he succeeded in hiding his poverty from every one, so that every one helped him readily. Little by little his circle of friends and patrons grew larger. The Argentine is a generous fellow. He was appointed teacher of Italian in a flourishing college in the capital. He took to contributing to the wealthy Spanish journals. He requalified in law, made friends at the University with young men of good family, passed the examination for a doctor's degree with honours, and quickly established his reputation as an effective advocate. He certainly is a great orator. He settled at Rosario, made a rich marriage, and, like every one else in Argentina, no sooner had he got a little money than he plunged into financial speculations."

"Deserting philosophical ones," commented Cavalcanti. "Quite right too!"

"Yes and no," I answered.

But just at that moment Alverighi came into the smoking-room and, without noticing us, went and sat down at a table near by, where two passengers—two wine-merchants from Asti, as I learned later—were playing cards, too close to admit of further talk about him.

"Shall we go out for a bit?" proposed Cavalcanti.

We all four went out on to the promenade deck, which was the lower of the two decks reserved for first-class passengers. The evening was one of those soft evenings without moon or wind, neither close nor

fresh, which occasionally occur in tropical seas in spring and seem to lull them to a deep sleep. It had tempted many of the passengers on deck.

"Our seats are on the other side, to starboard," said Cavalcanti.

We made for the for'ard gangway, after the doctor had taken leave of us to go about his duties. We crossed it to the starboard side of the ship; but we found our seats illegally occupied. Not wishing to disturb the usurpers, we went up on to the boat deck, and found it deserted, and but dimly lighted by a few distant electric lights. Silence reigned over all. Even the heavy panting of the engines down below reached our ears only as a vague and distant murmur. Above us the sky, silent too and dark, was spangled with myriads of stars, like an immense black veil sparkling with gems. We sat down on a bench and for a moment we too kept silence, as if subdued by the sudden quiet into which we had stepped. Cavalcanti was the first to resume the conversation.

"You were saying——"

"The fact is," I went on, "the demon of America has entered into this son of a poor Italian professor. . . . He already has several millions, and he wants to double them. Then he 'll want to triple them, quadruple them, and so on as long as life lasts. He 'll sleep, more or less, for four or five hours out of the twenty-four. He 'll take enough briefs for four counsel. He 'll buy, sell, buy back, mortgage, lands in every part of Argentina and in Paraguay. He has no family, for all that he has a wife and two children. He could build himself a palace, yet has no home. He is the up-to-date nomad, who pitches his camp in *wagons-lits* and hotels. . . . During the month I travelled in the

interior of Argentina, I may have seen him three or four times rush past me like a train or like lightning, in cities thousands of miles apart. He arrived from the south in the morning and was off for the north in the evening; he turned up again from the east, to leave a few hours later for the west. And yet . . . go into his cabin, and you will find it full of books; the latest publications in Italian, English, and French, works on history, literature, politics, and philosophy. He had no sooner got a reasonable competency than he set himself to pick up the threads of his interrupted studies. But he has never given up reading, in the train and at odd moments, in a furious hurry, often skimming through a book and guessing rather than reading it."

"True American fashion," remarked Cavalcanti quizzically.

"Certainly, if you like," I answered. "Though it is not unknown even in Europe nowadays. . . . And he not only reads, but thinks, like a ship driving through a storm in waves and leaps and bounds. His head is like a huge vat, seething with recollections of his studies in Italy, gleanings from his headlong reading, odds and ends of what he has seen and collided with in his frenzied rushes over the world, his own hopes, aspirations, and interests. They all boil up into a curious philosophy, full of extravagant, puerile, and original ideas, which is like must in fermentation: it bubbles up and subsides again, but is always in a state of agitation. You ought to see him in his own house, between two voyages, between two briefs, between a purchase and a sale of land, in the chair at the Rosario clubs, when he lectures and expounds, and would like to discuss, but cannot; for the worthy grain-merchants

listen to him patiently, it is true, but surrender before joining battle, and do not treat him as a lunatic only because . . . well, it 's lucky for him that he has his millions to counterbalance his philosophy! No, no: I may be mistaken, but I think the man a genius; in a way of his own, perhaps, but a genius all the same; a genius—how shall I put it?—who has reverted to savagery in the Pampas."

I stopped. Rosetti went on smoking in silence. After a few moments Cavalcanti said in a low voice, as if speaking to himself:

"What authority, what dogma, what principle can we invoke to prove that New York is ugly to a man who says it is beautiful? There 's no getting out of it: 'Æsthetics' has got its back to the wall. 'Hic Rhodus, hic salta.' "[1]

"A sudden idea flashed across me; and interrupting him, I said: "Try to answer him to-morrow. That will start a discussion on art, which will anyhow serve to pass the time. You see if this land speculator is not full of ingenious ideas."

But Cavalcanti made a gesture of horror. Did I wish to turn the *Cordova* into an academy of philosophy?

"Well, why not?" I replied. "Besides, if you don't care to, he will. He must be longing for it! At Rosario, poor fellow, he 's a kind of Socrates out of work, reduced to spouting monologues."

We talked a little about discussion in general and philosophical discussion in particular. At last Rosetti, who had not opened his mouth so far, said, as he rose from his seat:

[1] "Hic Rhodus, hic salta." A translation of Æsop's fable: "Here is Rhodes, make your jump here." A challenge to a braggart to repeat on the spot a feat which he pretends to have accomplished elsewhere.

"After all is said and done, what have we got to do on board? Nothing. So we may as well philosophise."

It was late, and we separated. The long talk about Alverighi had driven Mrs. Feldmann quite out of my head. I went to bed without having learned anything about her, who she was, or whence she came. My cabin had two berths, one for myself, and one for the boy. I turned in without dawdling, put out the light, and laid my head on the pillow; but more soothing than the soft pillow to me was the thought that at last, after the turmoil of the last five months, I could take fifteen days' rest in mid-ocean. No more receptions, no more lectures, letters, telegrams, or new faces! To be able to go to sleep at night without thinking of to-morrow's duties, and to wake up between sea and sky, far from the troubles of the world and of one's private affairs! To be able to cull on the tree of life that fruit which is now so rare and only ripens once in a while: leisure without self-reproach!

CHAPTER IV

WHEN I came on deck next day between eight and nine o'clock, refreshed by the deep sleep of the first night at sea, I found that an extraordinary report was flying like an electric spark through the ship from bridge to hold. I first heard of it about ten o'clock from Alverighi who, breaking off from a book he was reading,—I saw later that it was a Shakespeare,—rose and came to meet me on the boat deck, and asked me with some excitement:

"Is it true that that fair lady who appeared last night is the wife of a very wealthy New York banker?"

I answered that I did not know, but that from her manners and accent I judged her rather to be French. I added that the clothes she wore the first evening suggested that she was accustomed to good society. But I remarked that it was singular that a millionairess should be travelling by the little *Cordova* and not in a steamer of her own class, as the rules of etiquette on this point extended even to mid-Atlantic. Alverighi said that a diamond merchant called Levi from Venice, who was on board, had valued the necklace she wore at fifty thousand francs. A little later, the chief steward stopped me in the entrance to the dining-saloon, and with a radiant smile of legitimate pride, said:

"Do you know, that lady is the wife of one of the richest Americans in the States?"

These reports revived my curiosity, which had been somewhat lulled by the conversation of the evening before and by the night's rest. But it was no use looking for the only two persons who could probably have given me any information, Cavalcanti and the Admiral. Neither had yet left his cabin. So I had to possess my soul in patience until luncheon time.

At luncheon the only topic of conversation was Mrs. Feldmann, who stayed in her cabin, thus leaving us free to discuss her to our hearts' content. We found out at last from the Admiral that the rich American was really a Frenchwoman, daughter of a Parisian banker called Blum, and married to Frederick Feldmann, of Loewenthal & Co., bankers, of New York; that for three years past she had been living at Rio where her husband was manager of the "South American Syndicate," a huge railway, banking, and mining enterprise controlled from New York. I then knew more or less who she was, as I had known her husband at New York. She was the topic of interest, not only at the middle table, but at every table in the dining-room, and every now and then a head was turned towards the chair in which she should have been sitting.

Interest in her had driven out of my head the discussion of the evening before, when suddenly, just before the end of lunch, Alverighi asked Cavalcanti point-blank if he admired *Hamlet*. He answered that he admired it very much indeed.

"Well," said the other, "would you like me to prove to you, as clearly as that two and two make four, that the tragedy of *Hamlet* is very ordinary stuff?"

We looked glumly at each other. Cavalcanti answered with a gesture of resignation, as much as to say: "If it gives you any pleasure." I guessed at

once that Alverighi was longing to resume hostilities; but why choose that way, when no one had even alluded to *Hamlet* the evening before? I could not guess the reason.

"Very well," said Alverighi briefly, "this evening after dinner I will fulfil my promise. I have brought a Shakespeare with me, as I wanted to read it again on the voyage. But you, Cavalcanti, must promise to refute each one of my arguments."

The subject dropped; but we looked forward to a discussion of *Hamlet* as likely to prove a pleasant way of passing the long, empty days in mid-ocean. So we agreed that it should take place that evening in the upper saloon.

Luncheon was finished, and the siesta, indispensable to travellers in tropical seas,—we had reached 23° 53′ S. lat. and 39° 49′ W. long. at midday,—called us all to our cabins. It was between four and five o'clock when I again emerged on the promenade deck. I found on the left of the door, between it and the companion to the upper deck, seven or eight passengers seated in a circle on seats and chairs. There were the two wine merchants, an Italian doctor from São Paulo with his wife on their way home, a fair Genoese, tall and dark, with shining black eyes and thick dark eyebrows, who was going to Genoa to show to her parents two children born to her in Buenos Aires, and several other women. They were all watching the companion in silence, as if they expected some one. Soon a woman came quickly down, smiling, and nodded her head; whereupon the Genoese rose and in her turn ran quickly on tiptoe up the companion, down which the other had come. She too came down in a minute or two, whereupon another mounted the companion.

"What on earth can they be doing up there?" I asked myself.

I went up, and soon saw what was going on. Mrs. Feldmann was lying on a long chair reading, between the four boats hoisted for'ard on the nettings, and the other women were coming up to look at her. Passing close by her in the embarrassed way peculiar to people who are trying desperately hard to look unconcerned, they gazed at her out of the corner of their eyes, and then strolled round the cabins back to the companion on the other side of the ship. I leaned against the nettings between a couple of boats, and watched two or three of these strange people; then advanced to Mrs. Feldmann, whom I had not yet seen that morning. At my approach she laid the book down on her knees, placing on it a hand covered with heavy rings, raised her head, and smiled. . . . But at first blush I scarcely recognised her. She was pale, and looked almost old and faded. Rather tactlessly obeying my first impulse, I asked her if she were indisposed.

"*J'ai donc une mine affreuse aujourd'hui?*" she asked quickly with a malicious smile.

I saw that she had read my thoughts, and tried to make amends for my want of tact, remarking that the sea was generally hard upon the fair sex.

"Oh! I'm never so well," she replied, "as when I'm on board a liner. I was made for a sea-rover."

I sat down on a neighbouring bench, and we began a casual talk about the usual topics, the weather, the course, and the ship.

"This is the first time I have travelled by such a small, slow ship," she said to me, with easy dignity, as if it had suddenly occurred to her to show me that she was accustomed to more select company than the

Cordova afforded her, but did not mind unbending for a few days. "It 's not bad here, all the same," she added. "The stewards are well-trained and willing, and the cooking is good."

We went on to talk about my travels in South America, and arrived finally at the conversation of the evening before.

"What nonsense that man—what was his name?—did talk," she said in a decided tone. "Exactly the same things as I have heard my husband repeat for the last twenty-two years."

That that young woman—at least she seemed to be young—should in a thoughtless moment confess to twenty-two years of married life was enough to surprise any one. But I did not move an eyelid, and merely observed that one expected to hear remarks like Alverighi's from successful European immigrants, not from native Americans.

"But my husband," she answered, "is as European as I am. He was born at Warsaw."

She asked me whether I had not known him in New York. I said I had; that I had met him at a dinner-party, as I had met so many other great New York financiers, such as Schiff, at the City Club luncheon, and Isaac Seligman and James Speyer at the Columbia University dinner. Mrs. Feldmann looked at me with an amused smile and said:

"*Ils sont drôles, n'est-ce pas, les Americains? Quels barbares!* jumbling up professors and bankers at a dinner in a happy-go-lucky sort of way."

And she burst out laughing. I protested that I was no advocate of a divorce between money and culture, and could therefore see no harm in such a dinner; on the contrary— But she pouted, and protested with

a gesture of disdain that bankers and financiers were the most tedious people she knew. Once again I showed no surprise, but the remark struck me as peculiar coming from the daughter and wife of bankers.

"I quite understand," I said. "You belong to that European school which holds Americans to be barbarians, your husband to the other, which looks up to them as the super-people."

I took up the cudgels on behalf of America with a will. I said that in New York, Washington, Philadelphia, and Boston I had met an aristocracy not of title but of merit, distinguished by their education, their refined simplicity, their love of culture, and the fervour of their disinterested aspirations. I added that the fault I found with the aristocracy in question was the excessive and sometimes chimerical fervour of these same aspirations, combined with a certain timidity and excessive respect for European culture, which forbids America to decide between the ideas which come to her from the old world, or even to express a preference for any of them; in welcoming them all, she welcomes too many. I concluded that, whether owing to her radical protestantism or to the philosophy of the eighteenth century or to some other unknown reason, America had struck me as being in several respects a land of mysticism; at any rate more mystical than Europe.

I expected all sorts of objections and protests; instead Mrs. Feldmann answered quietly, as if I had only said what she had always thought and as if she had completely forgotten what she had said a few minutes earlier:

"Quite true: you do meet many delightful men in America. The women appeal to me less. . . . I have

some men friends in America whose match I could not find among my European friends."

"Well, then," I answered, "what have you got to complain of? And why abuse the Americans? What harm have they done you?"

"None whatever; quite the reverse," she replied. "The happiest years of my life have been spent in America."

"How old were you when you went to America?" I interrupted.

"When I married," she answered promptly, choosing, like the ancients, to measure time by events rather than by the number of years A.D. And she went on: "I should be truly ungrateful if I complained of America and the Americans; and I do not complain."

"Surely you do just a little," I objected.

"Because I notice certain defects in the Americans? But we all have some. Not even you will pretend that the Americans are perfect."

"I should have thought that you regarded them as barbarians, more or less. Don't you think that a somewhat serious defect?"

She drew herself up, and, raising her arms to adjust the combs in her hair, looked straight at me, and said, in the confident and natural tone of one who is announcing an obvious truth: "*Pour des barbares, il est bien sûr qu'ils le sont . . .* Have n't you noticed how they spoil even the most beautiful things?"

"As for instance—?" I said.

"As for instance the 'Metropolitan,'" she replied, taking up her book. "It is a handsome theatre, and its representations are magnificent. . . . But before you know where you are, you have to bundle yourself into your ermine and furs, wrap a scarf round

your head, seize your train, and dash down narrow passages and steep staircases into humdrum Broadway, there to search wearily for your carriage on the filthy pavements, among a crowd of bawling footmen and chauffeurs."

I interrupted her, remarking that this was not reason enough to apply the term "barbarian" to a people who had accomplished such great things on a continent of such vast extent.

"But the whole of America," she answered, "resembles a performance at the 'Metropolitan,' which itself is like the architecture of New York. The disorder of a Babel on every hand; no delicacy of touch, nothing but rough, sudden transitions, violent enough to startle a cab-horse. Have the Americans no sense of harmony?"

The remark, though expressed in a rather peculiar way, was by no means a stupid one. But I did not wish to give in, so I reminded my companion of the conversation of the previous evening.

"But you heard only yesterday evening the new motto of the day. America is the mirror of the world's youth."

She was silent for a moment, then cried with an almost spiteful emphasis:

"I have met few men in the course of my life who are more repellent to me than that . . . what is his name? Who is he? I hope you too find him repellent. He 's a downright boor! Did you notice his clothes?"

And she burst out laughing. I confessed that I had not noticed them; but that he generally struck me as being neatly dressed.

"But did n't you notice, the other night?" she insisted. "He had on a black coat and a grey waist-

coat, both of them irreproachable; but on his legs he had a pair of bright blue trousers."

And she again laughed. I shrugged my shoulders, and said, with a touch of sarcasm:

"Take care, he may ask you one day to quote your authority for wishing to prevent him from combining black, grey, and bright blue. However, if it annoys you to listen to him, I 'm afraid you will not like it when I tell you that he is going to talk again, at great length too. Yesterday evening he demolished Paris, Greek tragedy, and Greek sculpture; this evening it is Shakespeare's turn."

"So an American is going to defend the art of ancient Europe against a European?" she said, when I had told her of the arrangement made at luncheon.

After a few more minutes' talk I took my leave. On the other side of the ship I found Alverighi stretched at full length on a chair, absorbed in a book he was reading. The deck on both sides of him was littered with books. I exchanged a few words with him, and, seeing that he was reading *Hamlet* in English, and had Rusconi's translation within reach on the deck, I asked him:

"Are you getting ready for this evening?"

I chatted with him for a while; the rest of the time till dinner I spent speculating and joking with my other friends about the impending butchery of *Hamlet*, and thinking every now and then of Mrs. Feldmann, of the vivacity of her conversation, her cordial and gracious manner, the tones at once firm and modulated, serious and frivolous, of her voice.

When Mrs. Feldmann, late as usual, came to dinner that evening, she was wearing a second dress no less gorgeous than the first, but this time all black, against

which her bare neck and shoulders showed up with dazzling whiteness. The whole company turned to look at her, but with quite a different impulse to that of the night before. No one uttered a startled, "Who can she be?" but there was a general murmur of gratified admiration: "There she is at last!" The stewards hung about near her in threes and fours, and never took their eyes off her; every one, even Alverighi, addressed her in a tone of deferential attention, and she herself listened, answered, and smiled with no less cheerfulness and vivacity than the evening before. She looked ten years younger again! We talked, as was natural, about the approaching discussion.

"Are you ready?" she and I had asked Cavalcanti, urging him to make a good fight for Shakespeare against the "barbarians" of America.

We talked for a few minutes about the approaching discussion, and other things. Suddenly Mrs. Feldmann asked me whether it was true that in the United States it was possible for a husband to get a divorce from his wife without her knowledge, and without any notification to her of his intention. During my stay in America Mr. Gilder, who was then director of *Putnam's Magazine*, had discussed this topic with me at great length, so that I was qualified to answer the question with due seriousness. But I could not resist indulging in the paradoxes and exaggerations to which the subject lent itself.

"Possible? I should just think it was!" said I. "North America is the promised land of delinquent husbands. I remember one day, when I was in my bunk on board the *Savoie*, hearing two emigrants talking outside on deck just under the scuttle of my cabin. One was a Croatian, the other a Venetian, so they were

speaking in Italian, and the Croatian, an old hand, was saying to the other, whose first trip it was: 'A fine country, America! You can have as many wives as you like over there!'"

The lady smiled and said nothing; but the Admiral cried in a tone of resentment:

"Impossible! In a civilised country!"

"On the contrary, it 's the simplest thing in the world," I answered with an ingenuous air. "Many States allow one of two married persons, when the other resides in another State, to claim a divorce by what is called in American law 'constructive service,' that is to say, without personal citation, as if the action were one 'in rem' or 'quasi in rem' and not 'in personam.' For instance, it suffices to publish the citation in the local newspapers. Very well: if the wife resides in another State or abroad, the husband cites the wife in the newspapers, which the wife naturally does not read. Then on the appointed day the husband appears all by himself in court and gets his decree."

"But can you imagine any individual right more 'personal'?" protested the Admiral.

"You forget," I answered, "that North America is a federation of States. If personal service were made obligatory, the offended party would have to cite the offending party before the court of the State in which the latter resided: that means that the offending party, by changing his or her place of abode, could choose the State in which the divorce laws were most favourable. To avoid this rock——"

"They rush full tilt against the other! I congratulate them!" interrupted the Admiral bluntly.

"Admiral," I replied, "the laws may be compared

to automobiles running along winding streets: it 's a bad lookout for them if they keep straight ahead round certain corners! A smash is inevitable. All the same I may tell you this for your consolation. The Supreme Court at Washington has never decided to recognise divorce explicitly as an action 'in rem.' On the contrary, I believe it has in one case refused to do so. But, having established the principle, it has not dared to carry it to its logical conclusion; and there are those who hold that, as the effect of this decision, divorces obtained by 'constructive service' are not valid throughout the United States, but only in the State in which the decree was pronounced. You see the result of this opinion: that a man and woman who are divorced in a particular State, again become husband and wife when they leave it. In that State they can each marry again; but if either crosses the frontier of that State with his or her new and lawful spouse, travelling, for instance, from New York to Philadelphia, which are as you know two hours' train journey apart, their legitimate union becomes adultery as soon as they cross the frontier. If one of the married couple, let us suppose the wife, leaves the State, the husband who stays in it remains a bachelor, but on the other hand has a wife; and the wife, restored to that position, has no husband, because the latter remains divorced. In short, we have a wife without a husband and a bachelor with a wife."

"It sounds like a lunatic asylum!" protested the Admiral.

"It 's the law!" I answered.

Mrs. Feldmann had listened to this conversation in silence, smiling as usual; but it struck me that her smile was rather forced and detached, and I missed the

lively flashes and cheerful outbursts usual with her. However, dinner was over, and Alverighi and Cavalcanti went out to smoke a cigar on deck before beginning the discussion. The Admiral and Mrs. Feldmann went out also, talking together in a low voice. We had agreed to meet in the upper saloon at nine o'clock. Punctually to the minute we all, including my wife, who felt better and wanted to hear the discussion, met in the upper saloon, laughing and joking at the fate of the ever-luckless *Hamlet.* Some one had arranged several seats in a semi-circle round a table, with an armchair in the middle: this was assigned as a matter of course to Mrs. Feldmann. "*Συνέδριον κατασκευάσωμεν*," murmured Rosetti, quoting from Plato, as we all, with a rather assumed air of gravity, took our seats. Alverighi the barbarian, sat at the table with his book open before him, and, as soon as we were all settled, began the discussion.

CHAPTER V

"TO begin with, the first scene is superfluous. Try reading the tragedy without it, and you will see. What need was there to make the ghost appear to Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo, in the first scene, if these were going to report the apparition directly afterwards, in the second scene, to Hamlet? The first scene not only is superfluous but it weakens the principal scene of the act, I mean the scene in which the ghost of Hamlet's father appears to Hamlet, because the spectators have already seen the terrible spectre."

He stopped for a minute with his eyes fixed on Cavalcanti, as if expecting an objection. But Cavalcanti did not speak.

"The second scene, on the other hand, seems to me excellent," continued Alverighi. "The king makes a fine speech to the ambassadors whom he sends to Norway, then Laertes asks leave to return to Paris, and finally the king and queen give audience to Hamlet, who appears dressed in deep mourning, taciturn and gloomy. His entry on the scene is effective and the lines beginning

Seems, Madam? Nay, it is: I know not seems . . .

a piece of vigorous poetry. So is the monologue:

O! that this too, too solid flesh would melt.

It must be added, though, that the figures used by Hamlet to express his grief are all in the worst possible taste, eccentric, distorted, far-fetched, and marred by the crudities of the age."

He uttered each epithet with increasing emphasis, then again looked towards Cavalcanti, who however remained silent as before. "Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo," he continued, "report the apparition to Hamlet, and Hamlet longs to speak with the ghost. This brings us to the third scene, a scene of secondary importance, whose function it is to prepare the way for the coming love episodes. First Laertes and then Polonius talk to Ophelia about Hamlet's love, and warn her to be on her guard. We can pass on to the fourth scene, and now the trouble begins. Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus come on to the ramparts to await the ghost; in the neighbouring castle trumpets bray and cannon thunder; the king carouses. . . . And what does Hamlet do? Delivers a long tirade on intemperance and the vices of mankind. . . . It 's a fine bit of writing, I confess. But do please explain to me, Signor Cavalcanti, you who hold Shakespeare to be an inimitable delineator of character, for what reason does Hamlet choose this precise moment to preach a sermon to the world at large? Had n't he anything better to do?"

But Cavalcanti, though directly appealed to, did not respond. "Do you think," insisted the other, "that that was the right moment for the poet to make his talkative puppet face round towards the public and deliver this long rigmarole at them—the very moment when Hamlet, with mind full of anxious doubt, should have been expecting the ghost of his murdered father? Would you have him talk like that in any

drama of yours? I beg you to answer me Yes or No."

Cavalcanti may have preferred the rôle of interested spectator of the discussions of others to taking part in them himself. All the same, diplomat as he was, he could be a subtle adversary in an argument when necessity arose. He could no longer, without a breach of good manners, ignore Alverighi's pointed questions. Besides, he probably felt, as we all had felt at the first resolute thrusts of Alverighi's violent but by no means stupid criticisms, that the discussion was too serious for us to treat it in fun, as we had been inclined to do up till now, at least to ourselves. But Cavalcanti spoke at first as if he only did so with reluctance.

"Hamlet," he said, "is not a man, like you or me. He is an erratic, fantastic spirit. He abandons himself to his thoughts, and they drive him hither and thither. He expresses his ideas just as they come to him, without any logical sequence in his reasoning."

"Reasoning, do you call it?" retorted Alverighi promptly, "or should we rather call it unreason? For you cannot evade the difficulty; it is either reason——"

"It is reason and unreason, both at once," interrupted Cavalcanti abruptly. "He may seem to wander, but there is a bond of connection running through all he says. It is hidden, it is true, and not easy to trace; but it 's there all the same."

Alverighi smiled sarcastically. "'A bond of connection which exists but is invisible.' It may be so, though I can't understand it. Anyhow, we shall return to the subject shortly in connection with Hamlet's madness. About the end of the act I now say nothing; the ghost scene is a powerful one. Second act: Hamlet

begins to feign madness. Because Hamlet pretends to be mad; we shall agree upon that at any rate, I hope?"

"Yes and no," answered Cavalcanti with some hesitation.

"What do you mean?" interrupted Alverighi impetuously. "Does n't Hamlet himself say over and over again to his friends, and to his mother too, that he is pretending? And how comes it that none can say for certain of this real and living character whether he is mad or not?"

"The character of Hamlet," answered Cavalcanti in a rather embarrassed way, "is complex and profound, and consequently involved and obscure. One side of his character will strike one person, another side another, and each will deduce from it his conception of the whole. That is just the reason why so many people are attracted and interested by it. Besides, people who feign madness are always in some degree really mad. Modern science has found it to be so. The genius of Shakespeare perceived instinctively——"

But Alverighi, who had already begun to show signs of impatience and disagreement while Cavalcanti was speaking, at last burst out:

"What *are* you saying! Do you mean to make out that Shakespeare was the forerunner of Cesare Lombroso? Why not the inventor of the telegraph and of the aëroplane, while you are about it? We shall get to that some day with you admirers of Shakespeare. Would you like to know the truth about Hamlet's profound character and his madness? I 'll tell you. His madness is a fragment left by an oversight in the drama and forgotten. You know that Shakespeare

drew his drama from Saxo Grammaticus. Have you ever read Saxo Grammaticus? Well, do so. You 'll find that Hamlet is a tiny boy when his father is murdered. Yet the chronicler's account is comprehensible, clear, logical, and human. The uncle usurps the child's power; Hamlet is removed by friends of his father to a remote castle. He grows up, knowing that his uncle's eye is on him, and for that reason pretends to be imbecile; imbecile, you 'll notice, not mad. His object is to reassure the usurper that he will not one day assert his claim to the throne, to save his own life, and to avenge his father's death. . . . In short the succession to the throne is the reason of Hamlet's feigned idiocy . . . and I defy any one to prove that this reason is not reasonable. But now appears a sovereign genius, the prince of poets, a man of universal talent, and buries his hands in the old story. Great heavens, look at the result! He makes the murder of the father happen when Hamlet is already a man; and the whole drama, so simple and human in the chronicler's version, becomes an indecipherable puzzle. Why is not Hamlet the king instead of his uncle? Take away the struggle for the succession, to which the poet never alludes, and the feigned madness ought to disappear as well. But it has not disappeared. Why has it not? Probably because it lent itself to comical scenes, calculated to make the pit split their sides with laughter, just as the ghost made their flesh creep. That is why Shakespeare has brought this ghost on the scene twice over."

Alverighi's listeners were still unconvinced, though less so than at first. But we all felt that his last criticisms were difficult to refute. In fact no one, not even Cavalcanti, attempted to answer them. Alverighi

looked round his audience, exulting in his first victory, and continued:

"As to the second act, I will only remark that it is composed of several long scenes: the conversation with Polonius in which Hamlet plays the madman, the conversation with Rosenkranz and Guildenstern, and the long talk with the comic characters. But the point of all these scenes is not apparent till the last moment, in the final monologue, when Hamlet accuses himself of inaction and announces his final resolve to do something to discover the truth. In short, the situation is this: Hamlet is perplexed, he does not know whether the ghost's story is a true one. How is he to make sure that the apparition is not a devilish trap? He has recourse to the artifice of the theatrical representation. Excellent idea that, really good stuff for a tragedy! What a marvellous act a poet could have made out of it, first announcing and then gradually filling in and developing the situation! Instead of this, Shakespeare has succeeded in spoiling everything. The situation is not sighted by the reader till the end of the act; and no sooner is it sighted than it is unfolded in a few lines, which fall together with the curtain on the reader or spectator like a blow from a club! Now we come to the third act," he continued, rapidly turning over several pages of his book.

At this point I thought I felt my chair swaying gently. I looked at the window curtains, and saw that they were waving as if stirred by the wind, though all the shutters were closed. The steamer was entering broken water.

"The king, the queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosenkranz, and Guildenstern," continued the lawyer, "discuss Hamlet's madness. They decide to try the

Ophelia test. They all go out except Ophelia. Hamlet comes in, declaiming the famous monologue, 'To be or not to be.' A really beautiful dissertation on suicide, no one can deny it: but I should very much like to know why the poet put it into the mouth of his hero at this precise juncture. Was it to depict his inveterate melancholy? I grant that this thesis may be maintained. Hamlet alludes to suicide in his first monologue" (and Alverighi turned back to the beginning of his book):

> "'Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter' . . .

"But in that case this tremendous thought ought to crop up every now and then in Hamlet's speeches, if it is always present to his mind. Instead, after the first allusion to it and after this dissertation, it drops out altogether. . . . So this too is a flash which suddenly illumines the tragedy for a moment, and then, all is night again. In short, Hamlet now and then remembers that he is himself; and sometimes his bad memory deceives him, and he is somebody quite different. For the rest, if we skip for one moment the famous scene of the theatrical representation, we get from the king another curious example of the mania all Shakespeare's characters have for philosophising at random. After the play, this jewel of a king proposes to kill Hamlet, and gives the necessary orders. No sooner has he conceived this touching idea, than he is suddenly seized with a fit of tenderness and wants to pray. But he cannot, poor fellow, because the peccadillo of his brother's murder lies heavy on his conscience. He regrets having perpetrated it, and is in despair at his

want of real repentance for it: so, to console himself, he too swallows a draught of philosophy and discourses about prayer, remorse, and the incorruptible justice of God. Finally he succeeds in praying, hoping to gain consolation and comfort therefrom. Meanwhile his hired bullies are preparing to murder Hamlet. The king does not spare a thought, in his fit of repentance, to this second peccadillo, for if he repented of this one as well, how could the divine William have brought his tragedy to a close?"

But this last outrage on a work of art so dear to him had the merit of at last awaking the dormant dialectician in Cavalcanti.

"No, no," he cried with a vehemence unusual in him, "that is not the way to criticise a masterpiece. You are applying to *Hamlet* the rules of the *Poetics* of Aristotle, the canons of Greek tragedy. I am well aware that, judged by Aristotle's rules, the tragedies of Shakespeare would be classed among the inferior, or episodical as Aristotle calls them. But I protest that it is unfair and improper to apply the canons made for one art to another which is later in time and different in character, and belongs to a different epoch altogether. No: art is never one and alone, but takes various forms, and is continually changing. It is of great antiquity, yet always new. There 's the Greek drama, which had its own rules, required unity of action, simplicity of plot, rapidity of development, gradation of effects, proportion of parts, while the characters had to be simple, intelligible, and as clear as crystal. But because we are fortunate enough to possess immortal masterpieces in this category of art, must we assume that there can be no art beyond these masterpieces? Shakespeare portrays violent passions

and unbalanced characters. What you call his defects should be considered from this point of view, and they will appear pearls of great price. To be sure, his images are often strange and distorted, but that is because he wishes to depict states of mental storm and convulsion. You say that in the second act the situation is cleared up all of a sudden in a few verses at the end, without adequate preparation. Quite true; because that is precisely where Shakespeare's art lies. He does not deal in 'nuances'; he bursts out from time to time in a sudden flash which lights up the infinite and dies away again; he is full of shocks and surprises."

Just like America, I thought, remembering Mrs. Feldmann's conversation.

"The poet who would depict the gusts of passion," continued Cavalcanti, "cannot write like Virgil or Racine. The first scene of the first act is superfluous, say you. That is exactly what it is not, I answer. The reader has already seen the ghost and shuddered at it, he therefore awaits with all the more intense anxiety its reappearance, no longer to the strangers, but to the son. In a Greek drama this scene would be redundant, we agree on that point. But in the case of art like that of Shakespeare redundance is necessary; it is not a defect, it is an embellishment. You say that the characters talk at random. . . . Do we, in life, never talk at random? Is life all order, symmetry, and peace? No: it is storm, war, chaos, mountain, and glacier as well. . . . Don't forget that by no mere coincidence the spread of admiration for Shakespeare coincided with that of the passion for Alpine climbing!"

I had never heard the gentle Cavalcanti talk with so much passion. But his concluding remarks were listened to with less attention than his opening words,

because his audience were beginning to feel the rolling of the ship. I was wondering whether the swell would not before long succeed in emptying the saloon of philosophy and philosophers alike, when Alverighi, who, strange to say, had been listening with a smile of obvious complacence, shut the book in front of him and threw it aside exclaiming:

"At last! It 's been a tough job, but we've got it now. Excellent! You have repeated with regard to Shakespeare exactly what I said of New York. Do you remember? That nature is not made on the square, and that in consequence lack of proportion, inequality, and violence can and should be elements of beauty just as they are vital forces. . . . New York is to classical styles of architecture what Shakespeare is to Sophocles. To admire the one and despise the other would be to be guilty of inconsistency. When you argued that harmony and proportion——"

But Cavalcanti stopped him, saying:

"Steady! you are going too fast. Who denies that there is a substratum of beauty underlying even the savage disorder of New York? Not I, for one. But I am not prepared on that account to deny, like you, the beauty of the ancient cities of Europe. There I cannot follow you. Beauty is not one and alone; it is multiform, or rather infinite. I consider that the human mind is capable of creating infinite forms of beauty, so that it is necessary not to impose on it conditions, barriers, restrictions, or arbitrary rules, but on the contrary to aim at acquiring a capacity for understanding and admiring as infinite as is the capacity for creating. I admire Sophocles and Shakespeare, Shakespeare and Molière, Rossini and Wagner, without any effort; rather, the pleasure I derive from the one

enhances that afforded by the other. You smile, of course. I know that we Americans are mere rustics where modern culture is concerned, because we gape open-mouthed at every beautiful thing we see. And yet I may tell you that in this respect at least the European has a great deal to learn from us. I venerate Europe as our mother, and mother of our culture; but I cannot understand why she should insist so pertinaciously on stirring up strife and discord on the serene heights of Olympus. . . . Why, because she affirms one truth and admires one form of beauty, must she needs deny or scorn another? How comes it that every philosopher, artist, man of science, or man of letters in the old world no sooner tastes the fruit of the sacred tree than he fancies himself a man apart, tries to balance himself in the infinite all by himself, astride on the tiny fragment of the whole which is his own, and becomes a little god, irritable and cruel, who denies and tries to annihilate everything outside himself—power which he does not share, riches, if he has not got any, tradition, if he is an upstart, science, if he is an artist or a philosopher, philosophy and art if he is a man of science; youth when he is old; the future, because he lives in the present? Why does every man of talent on your side of the Atlantic, as he reaches maturity, find it necessary to convince himself and the world of the growth of his powers by a wholesale massacre? Why need he hurl himself against his fellow-workers in the same field as himself, as against mortal enemies? Why need he assail all doctrines which differ from his own, the schools of thought to which he does not belong, the tendencies which he does not approve, as if variety were a mortal danger in the realm of thought and of beauty? No: we Americans think that Truth

is a treasure hidden, like the gold of the Old Mountains we visited with our friend Ferrero, in the hard rock of ignorance; that no one can hope to retrieve more than the tiniest fragment of it, and that only with infinite labour. Why then risk losing the gold, while squabbling, as you do, about the best way of extracting it? We Americans would have the human mind adorn the world with all the beauty it can devise. Our respect for beauty is too catholic—write us down barbarians for it if you wish, you superior Europeans!—not to feel ourselves bound to allow all arts and all works to be beautiful after their own style, too catholic for us to dare to constrain them to a beauty foreign to their nature and the creature of our own caprice. If that is barbarism, we are proud to be barbarians, O ye men of the Old World!"

Philosophy had for a moment been more potent than the motion of the sea. We all, Europeans and Americans alike, burst into applause and cries of "Bravo!" This gust of profound, sincere, and comprehensive love of Truth and Beauty, wafted to us from America, from Brazil, from the city reposing in the lap of the virgin forest, had filled us all with emotion. But the applause had interrupted the conversation; and two stewards, who had been for some time awaiting their opportunity, entered and placed on the table in front of Alverighi two trays full of glasses, and began to draw the corks of several bottles of champagne. The public benefactor was Signor Vazquez, a friend and fellow-traveller of Alverighi's. He was a short, stout man of about fifty years of age, one of those rich, intelligent, industrious, and enterprising Argentine proprietors so little known in Europe, who, cleverly profiting by the streams of immigration and the rise

in the value of land, have succeeded in the last fifty years in throwing over the naked expanse of the republic a mantle of exuberant cultivation. Vazquez had property in the province of Mendoza next to that of Alverighi. He was going to Europe with him to secure means for irrigating it, and to try at the same time to open a market for frozen meat in those countries of continental Europe which still subsist on home-killed meat. With the entry of the stewards into our circle some of us rose to our feet. While the glasses were being filled Alverighi left his seat and joined us, but was immediately bombarded to right, to left, and in front. . . . Mrs. Feldmann assured him that she had understood him fairly well, but that the ghost scene, as played by Mounet Sully at the Comédie Française, was marvellous. The Admiral said that, whether in or out of place, the famous monologue was one of the most beautiful bits of poetry ever written. My wife defended Ophelia, Cavalcanti tried to explain the contradiction in Hamlet with fresh arguments. . . . They all spoke as vehemently as if they were protesting against a personal insult.

"Really," I thought, "admiration for Shakespeare has become nowadays a universal religion."

It was no use for the poor critic to try and answer all his assailants, for they all spoke at once, and did not give him time to reply to any particular question. At last he gave it up, and turning to Vazquez, raised his glass, saying in Spanish:

"Most excellent wine."

Vazquez acknowledged the compliment with a smile; but one of the merchants from Asti, who, attracted perhaps by the smell of the wine, had appeared amongst us with the doctor, turned to Alverighi and said in Italian:

"It is excellent, I agree; but I know of some Canelli that need not fear comparison with it. . . . You don't believe it? No doubt that 's because it is an Italian wine. But I should just like to serve it to you with a flaming French label."

"There 's not a nation nowadays," said Alverighi contemptuously, "that does n't wish to make champagne; even the Argentines do. It 's the only inferior product of Argentine agriculture."

"Except frozen meat," said the doctor rashly.

He had better have left that unsaid. At once Vazquez and Alverighi protested that frozen meat was the best in the world, and kindled a discussion which in a few minutes burst into a fierce blaze. Even Shakèspeare was forgotten. Who knows how long the new discussion would have lasted, if the ship had not, at this lucky moment, lurched heavily to port, making the disputants stagger and two glasses roll off the table on to the deck? The noise of breaking glass made us all turn round. The Admiral went out to take a look at the weather; the wine merchants and one or two others followed him. Mrs. Feldmann went back to her chair, and the others followed her example. The Admiral came back, and announced that the swell would continue till the dawn of next day; whereupon the discussion began again on the initiative of Rosetti, who up till now had not opened his mouth.

"What I should like to know," said he, "is this: Do you, or do you not, admire *Hamlet*? for that is the only thing I have not quite grasped. Yesterday you maintained that New York is the most beautiful city in the world; this evening you tell us that her architecture may be compared to a drama of Shakespeare, after criticising that drama in merciless fashion.

If *Hamlet* is an ugly drama, New York must be an ugly city, so far as I can see."

Rosetti, who had really understood Alverighi's argument, had delivered a vital blow in a joint of his harness. But Alverighi smiled confidently and answered without hesitation:

"Thank you for raising the point. You are quite right; it is the all-important one. Signor Cavalcanti cites as an example the American who admires two opposing forms (where such exist) of art, while the European admires one of them and scorns the other. I on the contrary think that every one ought to be at liberty to do what he pleases: to admire one of them only, both, or neither. Yesterday evening I maintained, in a spirit of contradiction, that New York is the most beautiful city in the world; but I recognise that any one who liked might adduce equally good arguments to prove the contrary."

Here he turned to Cavalcanti.

"I asked you last night what principle or criterion you could invoke to prove that New York is ugly. Very well; you can easily see that this principle or criterion does not exist, but that one can prove anything of a work of art, that it is beautiful and that it is ugly, that it is a masterpiece and that it is an outrage. For instance, take a writer whose style is pure and clear. If I want to depreciate him, I shall accuse him of being superficial, commonplace, and journalistic. But take an obscure writer; and, if I want to admire him, I shall say that he is profound, transcendent, and full of recondite sentiments. Again, if a poet, a novelist, or a musician, though he be profound as the ocean we are crossing, wearies me, what is there to prevent me from accusing him of being heavy, obscure, and in-

volved? I say that the character of Hamlet is obscure and contradictory. 'On the contrary,' you reply, 'it is profound.' The first scene of *Hamlet* is superfluous, I maintained, or rather, a positive blemish because it blunts the effect of the following scene, in which the ghost of the father appears to the son. You retorted that on the contrary it heightened the effect by preparing for it, and could not be dispensed with. The last scene of the second act, I added, is faulty, because it is not prepared for. On the contrary, you reply, because it is not prepared for, it excites all the greater surprise and emotion in the reader. According to my reasoning, the preparation was in one case a defect and in the other case an advantage: according to your reasoning on the other hand the want of preparation was inversely now a defect, now an advantage. Yesterday evening we fell foul of each other over New York and Paris, this evening *Hamlet* has been the bone of contention. But it is clear that in every art the harmony of the composition and the studied proportion of the parts can be dubbed geometrical precision, while an art which is impetuous, luxuriant, and unequal can be branded barbarous, impure, and coarse. Think of Petrarch and Victor Hugo, Racine and Shakespeare, Paris and New York. In short, whoever has a particle of brains is never at a loss for arguments to prove conclusively that what pleases him is beautiful and that what displeases him is ugly."

And he shut the book with a bang.

Cavalcanti said nothing for a minute or two, as if he wished to make sure that Alverighi had finished. He then asked the latter briefly and quietly:

"Well? and your conclusion is——?"

"My conclusion?" answered Alverighi rather impatiently. "How many more times must I repeat it? My conclusion is that there is no authority in the world competent to decide whether New York is beautiful or ugly."

Cavalcanti shrugged his shoulders, and said:

"I suppose, because our reasonings on the subject of the Beautiful are fallacious?"

Looking round at this moment, I saw Mrs. Feldmann sitting with her right elbow on her knee and her forehead resting on her hand, and the Admiral looking at her. Meanwhile Cavalcanti went on:

"Has it ever occurred to you on seeing a picture, hearing a piece of music, reading a poem, or catching sight of a landscape, without any preparation, warning, or prejudice of any sort, to feel welling up from the depths of your soul the cry: How beautiful it is! Have not even you experienced before the Campo Santo at Pisa, or the Colonnade of St. Peter's at Rome, or when gazing at *Love Sacred and Profane*, or reading one of Victor Hugo's odes, a joy, a transport, a brief delirium, so to speak, of pleasure, which is immediate, spontaneous, and unfettered? But that is just what beauty is; it is that mysterious quality which in works of art and in certain natural objects has the power of at once awaking in us that shiver of pleasure. If you ask me why these objects and these works have this wonderful power, I can only answer, It is a mystery! But the pleasure that we experience is no illusion. Any one can assure himself of that: it is one of the few things we can be quite sure about, precisely because it is a sentiment; for we only know life in so far as we can sense it. . . . Reasoning can clarify or obscure the sentiment of the Beautiful as much as any

other sentiment; but it can neither produce it nor extinguish it. Reason as much as you will, the sentiment of pleasure which I feel at the sight of the Venus of Milo I shall always feel, however much another may reason and argue for and against the beauty of the Venus. My authority is in myself, and is infallible! You are a philosopher and I need not dilate on this point."

"I am not a philosopher, I am a man with no time to waste, even on board the *Cordova*," answered Alverighi rather brusquely. "And so I say in so many words, We agree; the Beautiful is a something which gives us pleasure. But what is this pleasure? 'That is the question,' as Hamlet says. I am not content to answer, in your own words, 'It is a mystery.' When I am hungry and eat, I am sure that my bread is delicious. The pleasure I experience when I satisfy a need is so intense that I feel no doubt about my sensations. But what doubts do I not feel, when I try to make sure what sort and quality of pleasure certain objects and certain works of man arouse in me by virtue of their 'beauty'! At certain moments I feel the pleasure, at certain others I do not, and I cannot discover on what the difference depends. At other times, again, I am not sure whether I feel it or not: now it seems that I do, now that I do not; I make an effort to explain myself to myself, and do not succeed. Not seldom I perceive that I am not in accord with my fellows on the point: either I feel the pleasure and my friends do not, or vice versa, and shocked by the contrary opinion of others, my own opinion vacillates. . . . Art is a pleasure without need; it gives us pleasure, when we can enjoy it, but does not give us pain by its absence, like all needs; that is just the reason for mankind's love

of it, because it may always be a fount of pleasure, but never of pain. This is, however, the reason also why the pleasure afforded by art is uncertain, vague, and nebulous, and since my sentiment is obscure, how can I stay it, except with reasoning? It is the unreliability of my sentiment that impels me to try to admire by the light of reason. Uneasy and discontented, I grasp the torch of reason, and with it plunge down into the murky depths of my conscience, to enlighten myself and to discover whether what I sense is really beautiful! Unfortunately reason makes a sport of me: her lamp keeps turning round, and dazzles my eyes with rapid phases of light and shade; her answers are as ambiguous as those of the Sibyl, and my understanding fails me."

At this point the Admiral, seeing Mrs. Feldmann's head nodding, drew out his watch, and said:

"Gentlemen, it is half-past eleven. We must not trespass on the ladies' patience. We have a fortnight before us for discussion."

We all rose. Alverighi was radiant with joy, and we could all read in his face his exultation at having at last had the opportunity of unburdening himself, and at having come off the conqueror; for to the last he had remained master of the situation. I heard him say as he descended the companion behind the Admiral and Mrs. Feldmann:

"It is only too true. In Brazil you can already find young men here and there who consider New York more beautiful than Paris. There are not many, I know, but——"

Mrs. Feldmann cut him short with a yawn.

CHAPTER VI

"HOW comes it," I asked myself a short while afterwards, while undressing," that this idea should have been conceived in this particular brain, and at Rosario, on the shores of the Paraná?"

And in my little cabin I saw with my mind's eye the mighty river, sluggish and yellow, flowing over the desolate plain between the low banks, lying green and solitary under the great blue vault of the sky. When one day, by the banks of the Paraná, Alverighi expatiated on the riches of America and the progress of the world, it caused me no surprise. But it did seem strange to me to hear him discuss art and beauty with so much clearness and originality on board the *Cordova*. Among the many fantastic things he had said that evening, one great and simple truth shone out so clearly that I could not conceive how it came about that no one had thought about it before Alverighi. In vain I searched in the recesses of my memory for any inkling of this truth in the works of some shining light of philosophy. And yet it was absolutely true that art is a pleasure that is no need, a pleasure that is usually uncertain, vague, and insecure. To-day I feel it, to-morrow I do not. It exists for one man, but not for another. It comes and goes mysteriously. Man tries in vain to specify it, to communicate it by reasoning, to explain and justify to others what he

feels and why he feels it. True it was, too, that by reasoning one can prove anything one likes about every work of art, and that there is no golden key to the solution of any controversy about beauty and ugliness, between two obstinate disputants. . . . I put out the light, and meditated long upon these things. Gradually the glory of the many masterpieces I had admired, the recollection of the pleasure derived from countless works of man's genius, the canons and principles of art professed as a rule with such overbearing arrogance, seemed to dissolve into a wave of uncertainty, which spread like a mist over the face of the world.

No—was the conclusion I too arrived at—we possess no standard by which to measure the beauty of things: all the measures we think we have contrived are fallacious, subjective, and illusory. Beautiful is that which gives pleasure. Art contains no truth other than this vague, changeable, and subjective "pleasure without need.". . . The formula is ingenious, even if it does come from Rosario.

Next morning, when I left my cabin about half-past eight o'clock, the sea was calm and the weather fine, as the Admiral had predicted. But the deck was still deserted. The *Cordova* was a small steamer, compared with the modern ocean giants, of only five thousand tons burden, with accommodation for not more than seventy first-class passengers; on this particular trip she carried only a handful, about thirty, so that life on board was peaceful. There was but little gambling, and what there was, was subdued; every one turned in by 2 A.M. at latest, and the flirtations were decorous and rather half-hearted. I paced the deck for a time by myself, thinking over the discussions of the evening before, and my own fantastic speculations. Then I

entered the dining-room, where I found Alverighi at breakfast, while the stewards, in white linen coats, tidied the room.

"America covered herself with glory yesterday evening," I said, facetiously. And, not without a spice of irony, I asked him how, in the midst of all his business, at Rosario on the Paraná, and in his wanderings across Argentina, he had found time and inclination to meditate on absolute beauty, on the needs which give birth to pleasure, and on pleasures without need.

He smiled, and said:

"I? Why, I thought out what you heard me say between Friday evening and Saturday morning. . . . I have no time for that sort of thing in Argentina. . . . But on Friday evening, it irritated me to hear you all say, over and over again, that New York is ugly. After all, would it mean the end of all things if it were? Is beauty something to eat? Anyhow, I determined to put the whole lot of you in a fix. . . . It 's now your turn, and you must find your way out. But how easy it is to make a philosophical theory! If only it were as easy to make millions!"

On land I should not have let this issue pass without protest. But my "leisure without self-reproach" had demoralised me, so that I pretended not to hear, and made some casual remark.

Suddenly Alverighi changed the subject, saying:

"By the bye, that Signor Rosetti is a most intelligent man. We continued the discussion together for a little before turning in, and I think that he and I see eye to eye. . . . You know him, don't you?"

I then told him shortly Rosetti's history. Born at Forlimpopoli in Romagna, in 1840, he was included in

the first military levy raised by the Italian Government in the Papal States. He was posted to the Engineers, and sent to the old barracks in the Via dell' Archivescovado at Turin. Here he met my father, who was also then on service. He was admitted student, during his service, in the "Scuola di applicazione," and in 1865, shortly after obtaining his discharge from the army, he gained his engineer's diploma. Summoned shortly afterwards by the Argentine Government, who were searching in Italy for professors for their new polytechnic, he taught physics and mathematics for twenty years, from 1865 to 1885, in the Polytechnic and in the National College at Buenos Aires, where he had as pupils most of the men who to-day form the Argentine Government, besides carrying out several important engineering enterprises. He was thus able to amass a considerable fortune, and to return to Europe at forty-five years of age with an ample pension from the Argentine Government. He bought himself a house at Milan, and a fine villa at Bellaria, near Rimini, and devoted himself to various branches of knowledge, including mathematics, physics, history, archæology, and philosophy, reading voraciously and taking a catholic interest in men and things in general. We had been friends since 1897. He showed a liking for me, which I reciprocated cordially; for I liked the innate goodness of the man, his unfailing good-temper, his exceptional simplicity and modesty, and the vast knowledge he was so careful not to parade.

"He is one of those Italians," I concluded, "who have most helped to spread in Argentina feelings of love and respect towards Italy."

"How great is the virtue of America!" cried Alveri-

ghi proudly. "Look at Rosetti. If he had stayed in Europe, even he would be to-day a hack in some government office. Yet they say in Europe . . ." He stopped for a moment, then added: "We talked for a short time together last night, before going to bed, about the evening's discussion. He declared that I was right. . . . But do you know how he proposed to label æsthetic judgments? 'Reversible.' He told me that one can prove anything one likes about every work of art, because all æsthetic judgments are reversible. The formula pleases me immensely. The beautiful and the ugly are always interchangeable at will. Every merit can be reversed by reasoning and become a defect, and every defect a merit. It 's a brilliant idea!"

He asked me how Rosetti came to be on board the *Cordova*. I explained to him that he returned to Argentina every two or three years to look after certain interests of his there; and that this time he had waited for the *Cordova* so as to be able to travel from Rio to Genoa with me.

After leaving Alverighi, I loitered about on the two decks till luncheon-time, reading and thinking in a desultory way, watching the sea and chatting with the passengers who came one by one out of their cabins, all dressed in summer clothes. I overheard Levi, the jeweller, say to three women in the vestibule to the dining-room:

"It certainly looks as if she were the wife of a millionaire. Did n't I tell you so last night? You can't catch us jewellers asleep. . . . Show us a woman's pearls or diamonds, and we 'll quickly tell you who she is!"

They were talking of Mrs. Feldmann, of course, and

they were romancing too; because Feldmann was, it is true, a very able financier and director of a very important New York bank, a man of means no doubt, but I had never heard any one in New York attribute to him one of those enormous New York fortunes which people in the Old World love to assess at a fabulous figure, perhaps to console themselves for the smallness of their own incomes. But I was not surprised at my tacit prediction of the day before having come true. Other fables were beginning to fly about the ship. A short time before luncheon, the doctor's wife and the fair Genoese told me quite seriously that the shoes Mrs. Feldmann was wearing had cost her a thousand francs the pair!

Neither Cavalcanti nor Rosetti appeared at luncheon, so serious topics were avoided. When we adjourned for a smoke before the siesta, I drew the Admiral aside and told him what people were saying about Mrs. Feldmann. He laughed and said:

"Are n't all these people here like so many grown-up babies, playing a game of make-believe?"

He stopped for an instant, and then went on:

"Signor Ferrero, for the last twenty years the world has ceased to revolve on its old axis; we none of us know where we are. The riches of America have turned every one's brain. Everything 's upside down. Fortunes, no less than ideas, have lost their equilibrium. You saw that lawyer, only last night, ready to eat his hat sooner than to allow that New York is an ugly city. Because America is rich, New York cannot be ugly. When I look around me, I am simply dumbfounded. Has the old idea that speaking the same language, reading the same classics at school, and admiring the same great men constitute nationality

entirely died out? What are we coming to, when the first comer is to be allowed to maintain that Greek sculpture is ugly and New York beautiful? Can one conceive a nation without a history and without a literature? The great men of to-day are what the saints were to the middle ages. Grant to every one the right to judge the masterpieces of art and of literature at his own value, and you sow the seeds of anarchy!"

I looked at the speaker with no little surprise. How did an admiral—an American one, too, and a rather taciturn one to boot—come to think such startling and profound thoughts and to express them so simply? Were all the *Cordova's* passengers, admirals included, philosophers? I said nothing, but I thought over the Admiral's weighty suggestion during the siesta. . . . It had filled me with serious misgiving. . . . Yet how was one to impose the same judgment on every one, in the absence of a universal criterion of the beautiful? My misgiving was so strong that, unable to reason it away, I explained it to Cavalcanti at tea-time as we paced the port side of the promenade deck. Shivering with tiny white waves as far as eye could reach, the ocean was beginning to shroud its afternoon splendour with the veil of darkness at the approach of evening. The radiance of the day seemed to rise and concentrate in the vault of heaven, which, serene and happy, reflected in its furthest corners the dazzling red and gold of the clouds. Leaning on the bulwarks, we talked in a low voice while the wind fanned our faces, stopping every now and then to watch between the rising light and descending gloom the lonely waters, slipping astern to our left. Cavalcanti listened to my story, and replied:

"To be sure, to admire the beauty of a work of art

means to feel it; and one who would really feel it must not reason too much about it. The Admiral is quite right; I, too, said the same thing last night, though in different words. All the same, I cannot but recognise, for all my protests last night, that Alverighi, too, has the right on his side to a certain extent. There are such endless differences of opinion about the beautiful, that a man is naturally impelled to find a reason for his feeling: and that 's where the trouble begins. We are so keen on excavating and exploring the foundations of the house we live in, to see whether they are firmly planted, that we risk bringing the whole house down. I am well aware of that. But what are we to do? Knowledge is an essential. Besides, our excavations and researches reveal so many hidden treasures!"

To allay his own misgivings, Cavalcanti had resorted to the convenient aphorism so much used and abused by modern optimism: the principle of the universe is counterbalance! But he failed to reassure me. This argument seemed to me to be open to endless criticism. But to start a discussion was repugnant to my increasing laziness; so I gave it up. A gust of wind, whistling past us, tore the words from our lips, and served as it were to open a gap between us; then went howling on, to lose itself in the broken sea. We recovered ourselves, but the shock of the wind prevented us from resuming our conversation at once. Cavalcanti gazed at the sea in silence; then suddenly started off on another tack:

"Water, clouds, wind!" said he, pointing to the horizon. "The same yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, and for ever! Always that closed-in circle equal to itself in every part, unstable and mobile in every part! Does it not strike you that that circle dwarfs the

ocean? What a curious phenomenon it is! Water animates all the countries of the world, because it is the mobile principle in the midst of the unchangeable forms of the mountains and plains. But in the ocean, where the motionless forms of the earth are out of sight, this incessant movement of the waters resembles the eternal immobility of a desert. No: the ocean is not a living immensity, but a dead solitude, for it is always changing, and there is nothing in it which remains unchanged."

Again we were silent. Small gusts of wind blew round us; the glow on the clouds grew more intense and the gloom on the water deeper. The sounds of singing rose from the lower deck, and were wafted away by the wind. I turned round. The deck was empty, save for an officer who passed quickly by, and a sailor close to us, who was lazily and noiselessly whitewashing the roof of the companion-hatch. I then told Cavalcanti what surprise I had felt when I heard the Admiral philosophise as he had done to me.

"But cannot you guess the reason?" asked Cavalcanti with a smile. "Come, you 've been at Rio; just think! The Admiral is a Comtist!"

Subsequently we commented on the fact that there were several passengers on board with a good stock of education and culture. This brought us to Rosetti, and I repeated to Cavalcanti what I had told Alverighi that morning. We next discussed our other fellow-travellers. Cavalcanti had kept his eye on all of them, as was only natural, for to him as a novelist the observation of movements and faces was good practice as well as a pleasant way of passing the time. We talked about the two wine-merchants, and then about a young couple who had attracted our attention owing

to the contrast they presented, the man being short, thick, and dark, while the woman was tall, thin, and fair. Cavalcanti told me that the man was an Argentine from Tucumán who had gone three years before to study engineering in the University of Ithaca.

"In New York State?" I interrupted. "Why need he have gone so far afield for his studies?"

"That is just what I asked him yesterday. We had half-an-hour's conversation in English. Do you know what he answered? That the United States is the country which in the last thirty years has taken the lead in industry and business."

I recalled the Admiral's phrase, "For the last twenty years the world has ceased to revolve on its old axis," while Cavalcanti went on to tell me that the young man who had gone to the United States in search of knowledge had found there at the same time a wife, a girl who was herself a student at Ithaca. They were now returning to Ithaca, after a visit to his family. Finally we passed to Mrs. Feldmann. I retailed to him what she had told me about New York, and added that I could not persuade myself that she had been married for twenty-two years. He answered that he had only seen her once or twice with her husband, at receptions in Rio, and that all he could tell me was that she had a married daughter, and must be nearer forty-five than forty. All at once he cried:

"There 's something in the wind! Her husband bolted from Rio three months ago; she has left suddenly, or rather run away, otherwise she would not be travelling by the little *Cordova*. And I wonder now why she asked you so many questions yesterday about divorce in America. It would be a pity if you, quite

innocently, had suggested to her a way of quietly shuffling off the bonds of matrimony."

"No fear of that," I answered. "I was exaggerating last night. . . . Divorces do take place as I described, in America, among immigrants, scamps, and people of that class. But not in the upper classes. I don't think a lady like Mrs. Feldmann could escape from the bonds of wedlock in that sort of way."

"Really?" asked Cavalcanti. "Anyhow, I 'll ask Guimarães. The Admiral is sure to know; he is an intimate friend of the family."

So we chatted on the empty deck, between the gusts of wind which every now and then seemed to tear the phrases and thoughts from our lips, only to scatter them wildly like leaves on the ever-moving waves of the sea. But at this point Cavalcanti remembered that he had not yet found out what the ship's run for the day before had been. So we crossed over to starboard where five or six passengers were screaming and laughing over a game of deck-quoits. We read on the chart which had been posted up that at noon that day we had reached 16° 4′ lat., and 37° 22′ long. We took a few turns round the deck, then separated to get ready for dinner. When I was ready, I came out of my cabin, and at last met Rosetti, whom I had not yet seen that day. We talked for a short time about the discussion of the evening before. He confessed to me that he thought Alverighi was right, because all æsthetic judgments are reversible at will. In my turn, I repeated what the Admiral had said to me, that whoever sanctions promiscuous judgment on the masterpieces of literature and of art sows the seeds of anarchy. But Rosetti looked at me with a smile and said:

"Good heavens, what a terrible prospect! Sheer

anarchy! And why not massacre and pillage? These blessed men of war are always like that. No sooner are they off the quarter-deck than——"

"If, however, æsthetic judgments are reversible," I interrupted, "every man endowed with intellect will be able, I suppose, to despise the work which another considers a masterpiece, and no one will be able to prove that the one is right and the other wrong. Consequently, Alverighi is right. I do not see how one can impose admiration for Dante or for Raphael on an epoch which freely discusses everything, even the Deity."

"But the poor Deity," Rosetti answered with a smile, "no longer has at His disposal in the modern world either bayonets or a well-lined purse. Without gold and without steel not even the Deity can hope to maintain His credit with this perverse human race of ours. Art, on the contrary——"

"Has bayonets and gold with which to maintain her credit?" I interrupted again, in astonishment. "What, where, and how many are they?"

At this moment the first dinner-bell rang.

"It 's time for dinner," said Rosetti, "and you know that I don't like discussions at dinner. Let us adjourn till after dinner."

Dinner was quiet and peaceful. Doctor Montanari grumbled about the emigrants, and recommended any one who believed in the native worth of the masses to cross the Atlantic in the third class. He told us, among other things, that among the poor victims of an iniquitous *bourgeoisie* committed to his charge "many have a better lined purse than I have, plump *bourgeois* though I am supposed to be!" After dinner, our party broke up. Half an hour later, Alverighi and I

paced the deck, smoking and enjoying the night air. I was repeating to him Rosetti's dark sayings, when Rosetti himself came towards us. He joined us in our walk, and after a few steps, turned to Alverighi.

"I should like," he said, "to ask you a question about what you said last night, if you will allow me. . . . You proved yesterday evening that neither sentiment nor reason succeeds in supplying us with a criterion of the beautiful which is obligatory, universal, and valid for all; that art is a pleasure without need, and consequently is not only subjective, but vague and uncertain, comes and goes, is felt and is not felt, according to temperament, education, the century, the generation, the day, the hour, even the minute or some accidental circumstance, the coffee one has drunk, or the digestibility or indigestibility of one's dinner. If however it is an impertinence to attempt to impose upon others our judgment on this or that work of art, how do you explain the fact that every one pretends that what seems beautiful to him ought to appear beautiful to every one else and tries to impose upon others the judgment which is so insecure in himself? You 've only to look around you to see how rarely do two people discuss a work of art without almost coming to blows! Each one, instead of being content to stand by his own conviction, as would be reasonable, tries to force the other to own he is right, mocks him, abuses him, sometimes insults him. Yet he could not, if he were asked, justify that same admiration in any satisfactory way."

Alverighi thought a moment, then said:

"It 's only natural. The critics and the æsthetes have repeated so often that he who does not admire and hate what pleases and displeases them is an imbecile, that the poor public has been driven wild."

"Your explanation is ingenious," replied Rosetti, "but rather vague and superficial. I should like to suggest another, if you would allow me."

"I am all attention."

"Last night," continued Rosetti, "the discussion about *Hamlet* was interrupted for a moment by a discussion on the subject of Argentine frozen meat. Some one said that it was poor meat, and you and Signor Vazquez contradicted him. The same person, then, maintained that the works of Dante, Sophocles, and Shakespeare may be considered either ugly or beautiful, but would not allow that there could be any two opinions about the merits of Argentine chops and fillets. Frankly, this seems rather strange to me. I recognise that the sentiment of the beautiful is uncertain and obscure; but that does not imply that the sensations of the palate are clear and precise. The very idea would make Immanuel Kant turn in his grave! Now, for what reason do you allow me to form my own judgment of Shakespeare, but try to impose upon me your opinion of Argentine chops?"

Alverighi seemed amused.

"The reason is, I think, simple and clear. . . . I have farms, as well as a good many shares, though not so many as Vazquez, in a big Buenos Aires *saladero*. . . . If the whole world goes mad on Argentine meat, we shall make a fortune. . . . That is what we are going to Europe for."

"Interest, then, is the reason," answered Rosetti. "Might not much the same reason weigh in matters of art?"

"In matters of art?" cried Alverighi, in surprise.

"The interest I have in mind," answered Rosetti, "is perhaps not one by itself, but a collection of several

different interests. Just think for a minute. First of all, there 's the national interest, is n't there? It seems to me that every nation is bound to admire a certain number of writers and artists, in order to gratify their own conceit and sense of grandeur. Is n't that probably the reason why every state uses its schools to impose upon the rising generation the admiration of certain classics? The Admiral is quite right; there is no nation or country without a literature, and a literature cannot exist without officially canonised constellations. But, you will say, people's admiration of works of art is not confined to those of their own country. Quite true; other interests come in here. We admire the writers and artists of friendly nations, who can be of use to us; of stronger nations than our own, because they frighten us; we may even admire foreign writers and artists with the object of discrediting more ancient schools and arts of our own against which we for some reason have a grudge. The latter motive is especially prominent in times of civil war: witness the struggle between romanticism and classicism in France and in Italy. . . . I will go further; I believe that in the world of art even material interests have great influence. Every art is a means of livelihood for a number of people. These are bound to struggle for the classification of certain works as masterpieces, or for their retention in that category, at the risk of losing their daily bread and butter if they fail. For example, nowadays, works in every language are translated into every other language; do you imagine that this cosmopolitan taste is a spontaneous growth? I should be inclined to say that it has been carefully cultivated by the editors, translators, and critics who fatten on its not over-luscious fruits. The same might

be said of music and painting. Picture-dealers for instance——"

Rosetti spoke kindly, simply, and calmly, in the slightly ironical tone usual with him when he was speaking seriously. Alverighi listened attentively and in silence.

"All the same," he objected at this point, "it seems to me difficult to deny that our admiration for at any rate some works of art is disinterested. Don't we often see men and women expend money, time, and trouble to obtain recognition for an unknown sculptor, painter, or musician who is a stranger, a long way off, perhaps even unknown to them by sight? Or to bring into public notice authors who have been dead for years, even for centuries? What interest can be *their* motive?"

"Assuredly no political or pecuniary interest," answered Rosetti. "But I should not be averse to including in my category of interests the caprices of vanity also. Art, literature, and, in a certain degree, even science, are used nowadays by the few, like luxury, decorations, and titles of nobility, to distinguish themselves from the common herd. Is the object of their success in winning admiration for a writer or an artist unknown to the rest of the world, the triumph of that artist? Is it not rather their own triumph, the gratification of believing and feeling themselves to be more intelligent than their fellows? A feeling which is usually the more pleasant, the less it is justified."

"There can be no doubt, for instance," I remarked, "that many people applaud Shakespeare in a theatre, not from conviction, but in deference to public opinion. Several people, especially in France, have confessed this to me."

"Of course," continued Rosetti. "There is probably more *amour propre* than we suspect about all our artistic predilections. For instance, how does a work of art, even nowadays, come to be widely admired? A small band of influential admirers falls in love with it, that is to say, pledges their *amour propre* to secure the admiration of others for it, and to clench the eternal doubts and vacillations of the majority, who are not qualified to judge, by dinning into their ears the fact that the work is a masterpiece. Naturally this caprice of vanity is usually merely a whim of the moment; but the interests which impose a writer or an artist on the admiration of the world are not all so precarious. I should rather say that as a rule the fame of an artist or of a writer will be more durable in proportion as the interest backing it is stable and powerful. The most fortunate of all are the men in whose glory the state is directly interested."

Alverighi, who was listening with a thoughtful air, interrupted at this point, speaking more to himself than to Rosetti:

"Should we then be still admiring Virgil and Pindar in this year of grace, if the professors of Greek and of Latin, from one end of Europe to the other, were not banded together into a formidable syndicate for the preservation of classical studies and of their own stipends?"

"In short," concluded Rosetti, with a nod of agreement, "whoever examines his conscience will recognise that we admire works of art nearly always from a preconceived bias in their favour. We admire them because we want to; and we want to because we are impelled to by some interest, political, national, religious, intellectual, professional, or of *amour propre*.

And so we mesmerise, intoxicate, over-sensitise ourselves, so to speak. However, interests cannot impose admiration, if they have not enough force at their disposal. No artistic or literary beauty can long balance itself on the heights of glory, if it is not kept up by one of the great forces or authorities which govern the world; by a religion, for instance, which sheds round it the halo of its sanctity, or by a state, which enforces it through its schools, or by a coterie, a class, or a party which uses influence, money, and the sophisms of the critics and æsthetes to force admiration out of the masses who are not in a position to be a law unto themselves; or by a wave of enthusiasm, a microbe of suggestion which infects people's minds. . . . But Heaven help the art or the reputation which is backed by an interest of inferior potency! It is doomed!"

For some time I had been wondering whether Rosetti was speaking seriously or ironically; his reasoning seemed to me so peculiar, though I had to confess that it was ingenious and well-planned. Alverighi on the other hand had been listening with a rapt and impassive attention, without a sign or a gesture. At this point he burst out:

"I agree, I agree; we are quite at one, you need not go on. You are not contradicting, you are putting the finishing touch to what I said last night. For I hope you will not allow that what is imposed by worldly interests can be eternal and absolute. Such interests are all momentary and transitory. Nor will you repeat, I hope, that America is ugly and therefore barbarous, just because it does not please the æsthetes and critics of Europe."

"No, I certainly will not," answered Rosetti. "I

am half American, and have lived in America twenty years; to America I owe the leisure I now enjoy so much. . . . I have therefore an interest in defending America. But what about those who live in Europe and are not pensioners of an American state? If every one is impelled by interest to impose on others what seems to himself beautiful, the conclusion is clear: that will be beautiful to every one, which the strongest, or the people, or the class, or the faction, or the clique, or the cabal of critics, or trade interests, and so on wish to be beautiful. In short, the beautiful and the ugly will depend on force. Very well then, if Europe and America come to blows over the beautiful and the ugly, it is clear that that will be beautiful which is proclaimed to be such by the one of the two continents which can impose its opinion on the other. . . . Now can one doubt that for a conflict of this sort Europe is to-day better armed than America? I wish I could maintain the contrary, I who am so much indebted to America, but . . . Europe has traditions, schools, museums, monuments, philosophies. . . . You can see it for yourself: here on board, you and I, who were born and brought up in Europe, are almost entirely of the same mind; but Cavalcanti and the Admiral, who are Americans, regard our reasonings as a positive outrage. That shows that America does not consider herself capable of imposing on the world any criterion of the beautiful of its own; she feels herself bound to accept the criterion or those criteria which Europe condescends, generally rather ungraciously, to throw to her. What happens next? You have proved that all the arguments used to justify this assumption of superiority are sophisms, and you are quite right. But what can your voice, the voice of an acute and pro-

found critic, but of one crying in the wilderness, avail against a powerful coalition of interests? Consider that to maintain in the two worlds the credit of the various arts of Europe, and of the canons on which they rest, is in Europe the common object of states—there are the bayonets for you, Ferrero—religions, schools, museums, philosophy, journals, reviews, critics, a huge army of hungry artists and writers, another no less huge of public functionaries, not to mention a crowd of tradesmen and merchants, from editors to instrument-makers and picture-dealers—there 's the gold for you, Ferrero. Do you expect to destroy this formidable power by reasoning on board the *Cordova?* One moment, if you please. America ought in her turn to bestir herself a little, to pluck up courage, and to try to impose on the world a new doctrine of the beautiful; to force it to recognise that 'sky-scrapers' are more beautiful than the Palazzo Vecchio."

"I protest!" I exclaimed.

But Rosetti turned suddenly towards me, and said with a quiet smile:

"Do you believe, then, that people will never, absolutely never, be able to admire sky-scrapers? You have a pretty opinion of your own taste. My dear fellow, there 's nothing people are n't capable of admiring, when they wish to, *provided they wish to!*" (he emphasised the last words). "The old and the new, the curve and the straight line, the arabesque and the geometric, the big and the little, the rule and the exception, proportion and disproportion, the nebulous and the emphatic, the balanced and the unbalanced, the classic and the rococo, the Attic and the baroque, the rose and the orchid, the simple and the majestic, Italian majolica

and Chinese ceramic, wild mountain scenery and artificial gardens, tradition and futurism; everything may succeed in giving us thrills of pleasure, and these pleasant thrills, if compounded with interests, may be imposed, for some time at any rate, as the absolute measure of the beautiful. . . . But you may reassure yourself, you who have the glory of the old world so much at heart; you may reassure the Admiral, who dreads anarchy. It 'll be a long time before New York appears a beautiful city in the eyes of the world. The opinion that the arts of Europe are the models of beauty is imposed by so mighty an alliance of different powers, that America will not be equal to the struggle for centuries. Europe dictates the laws of the beautiful, and will continue to dictate them for a while yet, while America will nervously and bashfully await the arrival on the other side of the Atlantic of their crabbed and not always sincere verdict. You, sir, are wrong in invoking, and the Admiral in fearing, liberty. True, modern man settles accounts even with the Creator, as you say. But it is not so in art; here his slavery is a willing one. He does not want to be free, but looks for an authority before which to bow: the classics, the officially canonised constellations, the undisputed principles. If you release him from this yoke, you 'll see him hasten to prostrate himself and stretch out his neck for a new yoke from the impudent and the charlatans, the critics and the æsthetes, as you say, who give him to understand that they know what is beautiful and what is ugly. . . . But an authority and a mentor he will have at all costs."

Rosetti stopped, and Alverighi did not answer, but we all three in silence took two turns of the promenade

deck. Alverighi was obviously perplexed and embarrassed. At this moment we heard the bell announcing the ices to which the passengers were treated on Sunday evenings.

"Shall we go?" I asked.

Rosetti declined, and Alverighi said he wanted to do something else; so I left them and went into the dining-room. Half-an-hour later I came out of it on my way to bed; but as soon as I came on deck, I heard Cavalcanti calling me.

"Listen to what has happened," he said to me. "I 'd got hold of quite the wrong end of the stick."

The Admiral had just told him how Mrs. Feldmann's husband had started three months before for the United States, called—so he said—by urgent business and with the intention of staying away about four months. He said that Mrs. Feldmann had stayed quietly in Rio, waiting for his return, when suddenly, three days before the *Cordova* left, she had received a telegram from Mr. Loewenthal, her husband's uncle, begging her to start at once for Europe and the United States, as there were rumours going about New York that her husband intended to take divorce proceedings against her. Beside herself, Mrs. Feldmann had hurried to the Admiral to ask his advice, and he, as he intended to embark in the *Cordova* in three days' time, had persuaded her to come with him, as he might be of some help to her on the voyage. That was the reason why she was on board the *Cordova*. But before starting she had telegraphed to her uncle, to her lawyer, and to several New York friends to collect all the information they could, and wire it to her, at Rio, if possible before she started; if not, at the Canaries, where the boat was to put in. No message having reached

her before starting, she could not get any precise news before reaching the Canaries, in ten days' time. The first day had passed quietly enough, but my imprudent remarks about the facility of divorce proceedings in America had again upset her. The fatigue of which she had shown such obvious signs on Saturday evening was not, as we had thought, boredom at all the philosophising, but the prostration caused by protracted anxiety.

I was filled with remorse, and begged Cavalcanti to tell the Admiral that I had exaggerated. He told me that he had already done so, and that the Admiral was satisfied that it was so. I then summarised for his benefit our recent conversation. We looked at each other in perplexity. Then he cried:

"Art a matter of interest? But is n't beauty the most disinterested of pleasures?"

"According to this theory, at any rate," I remarked, "New York again becomes ugly, the cities of Europe beautiful, and Alverighi is squashed. That 's something to be thankful for."

He thought a moment; then said, shaking his head:

"I only hope we shan't have to pay too dearly for it."

The next day—Monday—no fresh news about Mrs. Feldmann transpired to satisfy the curiosity excited by Cavalcanti's report, for I thought it better not to broach the subject myself to the Admiral, and he did not allude to it. At luncheon I rallied Alverighi, repeating to him what Rosetti had said: how that, for all his protests, New York would continue for centuries to be considered an ugly city, inasmuch as the arrogance of Europe would have it so; and against this arrogance there was no appeal, nor were the

boundless territories, the mines, or the millions of America of any avail. . . . But Alverighi did not answer, and seemed anxious to close the discussion. "I 've settled him," I whispered to Rosetti, as we left the dining-room. The *Cordova* by midday had struggled as far as 11° 6′ lat. and 33° 6′ long., and the afternoon, in the increasing heat of the tropical sun, was sleepy, lazy, and "full of emptiness." The phrase is a strange one; but it well describes the tedium and idleness of long voyages.

The only distraction which offered itself to me was a conversation with the doctor, who was even more grumpy than usual that day, and dilated at length on the shortcomings of the emigrants, concluding:

"Signor Ferrero, I do wish you would take on my job for six months. . . . Then you really would get to know America. Travels and conferences won't teach you. When I hear speak of emigrants and emigration, I feel inclined to laugh. I 'll tell you what is wanted for that sort of people: not a plain doctor like me, but a mental specialist. Believe me, not one in a hundred emigrants has his head properly screwed on. They are all mad, or on the high road to it."

I laughed and protested that the doctor was exaggerating. True, the hordes that yearly crossed the ocean left a trail of victims in their wake. And yet— But he did not let me finish.

"If things go well with them, it 's their money, if badly, their sufferings; in either case emigrants lose the very small allowance of sense God has given them. But do you suppose that a man can live with one foot in America and one in Europe, astride of the Atlantic, and not lose his equilibrium? The result is that they all go half-mad. It would n't matter so much,

if they did n't all come upon me, and I have to cure them."

Mrs. Feldmann wore yet another dress that evening. During dinner we continued our discussion of interests in art. This time Cavalcanti joined me in rallying Alverighi, repeating that the riches of America availed nothing against the arrogance of Europe; that the latter would not allow New York to be a beautiful city, and that all the world was unanimous in declaring it to be an ugly one. But Alverighi once more avoided the discussion, and would not rise to our challenge. The evening passed quietly, but without my learning anything more about Mrs. Feldmann's circumstances. Cavalcanti either would not or could not make the Admiral speak. Again after dinner Alverighi disappeared.

Next day after luncheon we read on the chart that at midday we had reached 6° 17′ lat. and 32° 35′ long. So we should reach the equator on the morrow. But the day was burning hot, the sky and the sea an intense blue, the air dazzling bright with one or two huge white clouds in the blue sky. So we quickly dispersed to our cabins for the siesta. In the afternoon new fables about Mrs. Feldmann reached Cavalcanti's ears: how that at Newport she possessed an enchanted castle, where golden plate glittered on the table, and two thousand francs were spent every day on rare flowers. Once more the Admiral, in answer to our question, shrugged his shoulders with a laugh. He described to us the Newport villa as it really was: small, elegant, and hospitable, but a modest little house by the side of the ancient and luxurious country houses of Europe. I wondered where all these stories sprang from. For by now the wine-merchants, the São Paulo

doctor and his wife, the fair Genoese, Levi, and the other passengers of the same class had come to regard it as the proper privilege of the more cultured and wealthy of the passengers—the Admiral, Cavalcanti, Alverighi, and ourselves—to have access to the millionairess; even though the only reason why she associated only with us was because we alone knew the two languages she spoke, French and English. However, they were quite content to be allowed to salute her with a timid nod of the head and an obsequious smile, and to make friends with Lisetta, her maid, a girl from Nice who spoke Italian, a tall, dark, good-looking girl, lively and smart, who had consented with an air of self-importance to represent her mistress and the high finance of America among the less-important passengers.

About five o'clock we took part in "fire-quarters," a little comedy devised to entertain and reassure the passengers. Suddenly the bell sounded the alarm for an imaginary fire in the bows; even the cooks left their fires and their ovens to man the pumps. At dinner there was a new discussion into which we were launched by a chance turn of the conversation. The Admiral had taken a turn in the third-class quarters that afternoon and chatted with several emigrants. One of these, a Calabrian, had said to him: "We ought all to wear round our necks medallions with the image of St. Christopher Columbus." On hearing this anecdote Alverighi suddenly cried:

"Quite right, he 's quite right. Church and people are at odds!"

And he proceeded to explain this obscure phrase, telling us how fifty years ago the Church had had it in mind to canonise Christopher Columbus, and how, under the favouring auspices of Pius IX, an advanced

stage in the procedure had already been reached, when a certain abbot called Sanguinetti, in a learned book, had proved that in the last years of Columbus's life Señorita Beatrice Enriquez di Cordova had borne him an illegitimate son, Ferdinand; how the canonisation procedure had then been suspended and the great navigator abandoned by every one half-way on the road to paradise. We all with one voice denounced the narrow-mindedness of the ecclesiastics. Mrs. Feldmann, who was very pale that evening and was wearing a new pearl necklace, thought it shameful that men should treat so cruelly the memory of a great man who in life had suffered so much misfortune. Cavalcanti asked if the discovery of America was not weighty enough to counterbalance an illicit union even in the scales of divine justice; the Admiral said that, in spite of Beatrice, Columbus would not have disgraced paradise. Rosetti alone said nothing. To every one's relief Alverighi told us that in North America there had been formed an association called the "Knights of Columbus," whose object was to persuade Rome to assign to the discoverer of America a definite place in heaven. The conversation continued to turn on Columbus. I recapitulated, with words of admiration, the fascinating essays of Henry Vignaud on the discovery of America: how he showed that Columbus had not hoisted his little sail for the great voyage which was to influence so profoundly the history of the world, in the hope of finding to westward a new way to the Indies, but to search in the boundless ocean for the unknown land which a friend of his, thrown by chance on the coasts of America and brought back in a dying state, had reported to him in his agony. We discussed for a minute the question whether this new

version—so much more probable and human than the other—subtracted from or added to Columbus's glory; then went on to talk about the great monument which the Italians are raising to him in Buenos Aires, which some of us thought a fine one and others not. From the Buenos Aires monument we passed to the other monuments with which America has honoured her discoverer, most of which were unanimously voted ugly. Then Cavalcanti let fall an imprudent remark.

"Yet there is a sculptor alive to-day who could make not 'a' monument but 'the' monument to Christopher Columbus. I mean Rodin."

He should not have said it. Alverighi burst out.

"Rodin?" he cried; "that troglodyte? The sculptor of prehistoric caves?"

"Don't you like Rodin, then?" asked Cavalcanti.

"How could I like such monsters as he turns out?"

"You think so, no doubt," answered Cavalcanti, "because your eyes are too much accustomed to Greek forms. But you must have different 'sensories,' so to speak, for different artists and sculptors. . . . Rodin is the sculptor of transformism, who has revealed to man the animality of his nature. After Lamarck, Darwin, and Haeckel it was no longer possible to sculp the human body in its ideal beauty in Greek fashion; it had to be represented in its cruel and brutal animality, as Rodin has sculped it."

"That 's a good example of a 'reversible argument,'" I said to myself.

"And that 's why he sculps anthropoids, troglodytes, and monsters," replied Alverighi quickly. "*Le Penseur*, for instance! Fancy representing the intellect, the most noble faculty of the soul, in the body of a market porter! Go to the Louvre and look at the bust

of Homer, if you want to see Thought living in a block of marble."

"But in the *Penseur*," answered Cavalcanti, "Rodin's intention has been to represent Thought imprisoned in matter, with which it wages lifelong war. It is precisely in the contrast between the expression of the face and the heavy material of the body that the beauty of the statue consists."

At this point Mrs. Feldmann intervened; she had succeeded in following the conversation in Italian, with occasional help from the Admiral in certain phrases.

"Rodin," she said in French, "is an interesting sculptor because there is always an idea in his works. And that idea explains what here and there seems to be strange or inharmonious in the statue."

"For ideas I go to books," answered Alverighi in French. "In marble I like to have beautiful forms and sentiments powerfully expressed."

"I can quite understand, then," answered Mrs. Feldmann, "that certain statues by Rodin may not please you. But some of his works should appeal to you. Have you seen the Victor Hugo, for instance, in the Garden of the Palais Royal? What a solemn, meditative look the face wears, how wonderfully the body is posed! Do you remember the arm, stretched out" (and she held out her own arm), "as if to calm and to dominate? When I look at that arm, I see a vast and turbulent crowd that at its gesture grows calm and silent, and lends its ears to the poet."

But Alverighi could not see even the wondrous arm which displayed itself, living and white, to his eyes; could he be expected to admire one that was of marble, and far away?

"That monster of an arm?" he answered. "But

when I see an arm like that stretched out, I think of a pugilist, not of a profound thinker. The statue appears to me one enormous arm, with a man's body attached—for what reason, goodness only knows."

So we went on bandying arguments, in all seriousness and not in fun, as Alverighi had done the previous Saturday when he was discussing *Hamlet*, until at last Cavalcanti said, addressing Alverighi:

"This discussion is a living proof that æsthetic judgments are reversible. But to complete the proof, you should explain to me what is the interest which impels Mrs. Feldmann, yourself, and myself, to get so much excited over a debate on the sculpture of Rodin. Are not you and Signor Rosetti of opinion that in matters of art no question arises of imposing one's dislike or admiration on others, unless there is an interest to arouse it?"

Alverighi seemed to hesitate.

"As far as Mrs. Feldmann is concerned," he answered rather uncertainly, "the interest is obvious. She is French, so it is, of course, patriotism."

"And what, pray, may be the interest in my case?" asked Cavalcanti.

"Your case," answered Alverighi, "is not so clear. Probably you are influenced by that sort of pride which we all feel in admiring new and bold experiments, or what seem to be such."

"And what is the interest which moves you," asked Cavalcanti, "to depreciate the art of Rodin?"

Alverighi was silent for a moment; then said simply and drily:

"Rodin is antipathetic to me."

But Cavalcanti and Mrs. Feldmann protested.

"Do you think that a sufficient motive?" interrupted

the former, while Mrs. Feldmann said almost simultaneously, "Mais c'est l'homme le plus charmant du monde! Je le connais très bien."

But Alverighi would not budge.

"To me he is antipathetic," he said with emphasis, "because he had the courage to say in a French review, the *Revue* I think it was, that beauty is the supreme interest. Think of it, the supreme interest, even in town-planning! Rodin is capable of excluding North America from the civilised world, because New York does not please him!"

"Not improbably," answered Cavalcanti. "And would that, in the mouth of an artist, be a heresy and a blasphemy? It would be an exaggeration, I allow; but an exaggeration which would not surprise or offend me, just as it does not surprise or offend me that you, who went to America to make money——"

"To make money?" was the sharp and unexpected answer; "who told you that?"

Of all the strange remarks Alverighi had made in the last few days, none was more extraordinary than this last one. Cavalcanti stammered:

"For what reason, then, did you go to America?"

Alverighi, as if enjoying our astonishment, avoided a direct answer.

"So I went to America to make money, did I? Are you aware that, before I was eighteen, I had taken a vow of poverty, like a monk of old times? I was inspired by the idea of becoming something great, I was not quite sure what—a great poet, a great philosopher, a great novelist, one of the three or all three at once; in short, a man in a thousand, as you said the other night, Cavalcanti. I was a case for a strait waistcoat, I allow. But the post of professor in an obscure

Sicilian academy was all my earthly kingdom, and it was quite enough for me. A hundred francs a month seemed to me an ample salary for a man of genius, whose mind was teeming with immortal masterpieces. You must remember that I was born into a family of ascetics."

"Then why did you go to America?" again asked Cavalcanti.

"Why? Because, while I was ready to take a vow of perpetual poverty, I was determined to become a great savant. And as, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, it was borne in upon me that Europe would not bring me wisdom."

"You went to look for it in America?" cried Cavalcanti in amazement.

But Alverighi in his turn slowly crossed his arms, leaned on the table, and fixing his eyes on him, said deliberately:

"To be sure! I went to America to search for the Truth, and I have not only searched for it . . . I have found it. Don't you believe me? You think it incredible? Do you too think, then, that America is a land of gold and nothing else? For shame!"

Cavalcanti did not move or speak for an instant, obviously as much at a loss as the rest of us what to make of these extraordinary remarks; then said with a smile:

"I need not say how much it would interest me to know how this miracle came about. For I confess I did not believe America was capable of it."

"I 'm afraid," answered Alverighi seriously, "the story is rather a long one."

"Never mind," replied Cavalcanti, "we have plenty of time."

Alverighi paused for a moment; then said with a shrug:

"Very well; if you wish—when you wish."

"This very evening."

Alverighi turned to Rosetti and said:

"You 'll be there, too, won't you, sir? I hope to be able to show you that this final tyranny of ancient Europe—art, I mean—which you believe to be imperishable or nearly so, is tottering to its fall. Has already fallen, I should rather say. New times are coming!"

CHAPTER VII

ONE hour later Cavalcanti, Rosetti, Alverighi, and I found ourselves sitting in a circle round a small table on which were a couple of bottles of champagne, and some boxes of cigars, in an empty space on the promenade deck. The night was hot and moonless: under our feet the iron hull of the *Cordova* quivered noiselessly, while the sea, parted by the stem, splashed away into the darkness on either side, like a near but invisible cascade. Alverighi tossed off a glass of wine, lit a big cigar, rested his forearms on the arms of his chair, leaned a little forward, and, without noticing the passengers who were pacing the deck singly or in couples, began:

"I have already told you that I was born into a family of ascetics. My father and my mother—I cannot think of them without a pang, that they should be dead and I a rich man—had received all the gifts that God could give them, beauty, goodness, and intelligence. Yet what profit did they get out of them, in old Europe? They lived a life of indigence and slavery, he teaching little boys how to decline *rosa*, she bringing up several children in the teeth of a thousand difficulties, both of them without a grumble, but with profit to no one at all; because of all the many pupils that passed through his hands, I don't suppose that one ever really knew Latin. And I was marked out to

carry on the tradition! . . . At eighteen I embarked on a course in literature and philosophy. I was mad then, as I have already confessed. I wanted to learn something in a European school! However I soon got a dose of the medicine which was calculated to cure my madness. 'Study the aorist in the fragments of Xenophon if you want a serious subject,' I was advised one day by a professor to whom I had confided my wish to write a dissertation on the history of the idea of progress. It was not enough that I should have taken a vow of poverty; no, my learned professors were determined at any cost to stifle my intelligence, and to turn me into an imbecile. That 's why they cooped me up in a cellar, and amused themselves with doling out to me, crumb by crumb, odds and ends of the masterpieces of literature and of the great ideas of philosophy; and these crumbs they forced me to pick up from morning till night, now here, now there, on my knees with my nose to the ground. Naturally the four years were wasted. Not that I spent them with my hands in my pockets; anything but. In those four years I dashed off a novel, two dramas, a system of philosophy, and a dozen other trifles of that sort. But the net result of all this scribbling was that, whereas at eighteen I had thought myself a genius, and had made a big mistake, at twenty-two, after four years of study, I was afraid I was no good for anything—another mistake, because a certain amount of brains Providence really had given me. That I was good for something I think I have proved. Fortunately in the end I rebelled and escaped to America. Do you remember, Ferrero? In Rosario I told you about one of my professors. . . . He was the only one who really cared what happened to me. But, poor fellow! he was rather childish. He

talked about America as if it were his own home, and he knew as much about it as about the planet Mars. I can't think how it had ever entered his head to suppose that America was dying of hunger for European philosophy. The fact remains that he kept repeating to me that there was too much philosophy in Europe and too little in America, and that some one ought to organise a stream of thinkers and philosophers from the old world towards the new. Madness! But how thankful I ought to be to that madness; for it gave me the impetus I required. And one fine day I made up my mind and started—don't laugh—for America with the intention of there teaching philosophy. I went simply at a venture, with my old master's words in my ears: 'Go, go; a young man with brains, like you, will soon find his feet. In young countries it 's the young who make their fortune.'"

He stopped a minute, as if casting his thoughts back to the things of long ago. We too kept silence. Then he went on:

"So what drove me out of Europe was not poverty: it was the inadequacy of its boasted culture, the impotence of its official wisdom. That may startle you, but I mean what I say. However, it will not startle you to hear that I was welcomed at the gates of America by—Hunger! For whole weeks together my dinner and my supper have been a glass of milk. But after all, man does not live by bread alone; and at first my appetite was not my worst tormentor. Do you remember, Ferrero, the story of those terrible times? I told you all about them in Rosario."

I remembered his story, and added that I had already related it briefly to Cavalcanti and Rosetti.

"Excellent!" continued Alverighi. "You know then

that at twenty-four I had to set to work to learn a more serious profession than that of philosophy; I had to begin my studies all over again, and what studies they were! And it was not enough to study law: I had to live. I played on every stop in turn. I wrote sonnets for weddings, and a guide to Buenos Aires! Oh, the worries, the desperation, the anguish of it all! I, who over in Europe had aspired to be a man in a million! Now that hope was gone, I fancied that if I had stayed in Europe I should have become in a few years a great writer. I felt myself growing stupid. For three years, I did not dare to unpack the books which had been the joy of my younger days. How many times have I cursed America! One day I would think of suicide, another of starting back to Europe. It was my pride that kept me back!"

He paused, and poured some champagne into the glasses. We all drank, while Rosetti observed that many have triumphed in America because at the moment of despair they have not been able to escape. Cavalcanti added that in every enterprise necessity makes more heroes than nature does. While we were thus speaking, I saw Lisetta, Mrs. Feldmann's maid, come out of the cabin door, and pass in front of us almost at a run.

"At last," went on Alverighi, "I qualified in law, entered chambers at Rosario, and began the weary grind. It was now that I began to long for riches, not only as a diversion or compensation, simply so as to have some goal in front of me down the path of life. In Argentina the man who works earns a great deal. I worked without ceasing. After two years my chief retired and bequeathed me his practice. By 1894 I had already saved thirty thousand piastres, and,

following every one else's example, I bought a property in the province of Buenos Aires for fifty thousand. A bank lent me the odd twenty thousand. At last, one fine day, Fortune unexpectedly smiled upon me, when I was least expecting it. Fortune is always playing tricks like that, in America. You think she is a thousand miles away; and there she is at your elbow, having come up on tiptoe so that you should not hear her. . . . Just then a tiny plant with golden leaves invaded the plains of Argentina. Do you remember, Ferrero, those boundless fields of lucerne, the finest in the world, which we crossed in the train together? The Elysian Fields of the modern world, where life springs again from its very death-wound, where the lucerne, once sown, grows again indefinitely after it is cut, making three harvests in one year. The plant which grows by itself, with no need for the care of man, because of itself with its long roots it seeks out water as far as two yards below the surface of the soil. . . . Once sown, all it requires is a scythe."

At this moment I saw Lisetta hurry past again, followed by the Admiral; both disappeared through the door leading to the cabin.

"A plant which requires so few hands to cultivate it, continued Alverighi, "was a gift of the gods to Argentina. I will only tell you what happened in my case, one in thousands. . . . Because these are things which happen every day in America and nobody now takes any notice of them. . . . It is only to the Europeans, poor things, that they seem miraculous. Well, three months after I had bought my land, I discovered water at a depth of three feet; and one year later I sold the land for two hundred thousand piastres. After paying off the debt to the bank, I had more than

one hundred and seventy thousand piastres left, about four hundred thousand francs, gained in one year: enough to go back to Italy and live in comfort on the interest. . . . I confess that, when I felt that half-million in my pocket, even I wavered for a moment: but only for a moment!"

He paused, tossed off a glass of champagne, and continued with increasing vehemence.

"It 's a fact, I stayed, and so I became a savant! It is America and lucerne, not Europe and her universities, that have made me a philosopher. Do you remember, Ferrero, all those bankers, farmers, ranchmen, grain-merchants, French, English, German, Italian, and Argentine, whom you met in Rosario at clubs, receptions, and dinners, during the three days you spent with us? You only caught a glimpse of them; I on the contrary plunged headlong into business, and had to live in the midst of them; and do you know what I found, as I got to know them? I could hardly believe it, I thought I must be dreaming, I was astounded. What do you think? They were men from every part of the world, who had met by chance on the banks of the Paraná. They were not all men of much knowledge or education; they all lived in the base world of matter, as they say in Europe, making money. . . . And yet. . . . You, Ferrero, can bear me out, can you not? Business men in the two Americas are men, not wild beasts; they bite, but they do not rend, each other. Every one seeks his own profit, but not the loss, the humiliation, or the death of his rival. There is no such thing over there as a definite defeat for one who does not lose courage. All are optimists and would be ashamed not to have high hopes for the future. American optimism! Why, it 's a marvel-

lous aurora borealis in the drab history of the world, is American optimism. And Europe is sometimes so bold as actually to smile at it, as if it were a childish trait. We have a fine specimen of it on board here: Vazquez. Was there ever man more calm, serene, composed, well-balanced, precise, sure of himself, and optimistic? Would you guess that that simple and courteous man owns about as many acres as there are in the whole of Lombardy? Fancy owning Lombardy! Things like that make you Europeans giddy. . . . But in America no one sees anything surprising in them; they may happen to any one any day. . . . So I found myself wafted, as it were in a dream, into the midst of gay, lively, clever men, vigorous in the defence of their own interests, but not soured, malicious, or depressed; men free from that horrible jealousy which regards another's fortune as its own misfortune, conscious that their little daily struggles are merged into the universal progress of their country. In short they are thoroughly sound people, real men and not shadows, 'fine fellows' as they say in the north, who are worth their weight in gold. And, astonished beyond measure, I turned my eyes towards Europe, and regarded the men who live far above the sordid interests of riches, in the Olympic atmosphere of pure ideas and forms—" he paused; then with a burst—"and found them raging, envious, malignant, false, intolerant, perverse, and unclean!"

We smiled; but at this moment a steward who was passing, seeing our glasses empty, came up and filled them up again. We interrupted our conversation to drink; and then Rosetti proposed that we should leave our seats and continue our talk walking up and down the deck. We did so, and Alverighi continued:

"You asked me the other day, Signor Cavalcanti, in the course of your eloquent discourse—by the bye, there were some fine ideas in that discourse, if only you were not so bigotedly European! . . . Let 's see, what was I saying? Oh, yes; you asked me why in Europe every philosopher, writer, and artist wants to be the only one, and would like nothing better than to be able to exterminate all his rivals. Further, since he cannot poison them, nor hire cut-throats to kill them, nor put them away by a 'lettre de cachet' in some new Bastille or in distant fever-stricken lands——"

"Stop!" interrupted Cavalcanti, laughing, "I never accused the flower of European culture of any such misdeeds. I only deplored their intolerance."

"In short," repeated Alverighi, "finding it impossible to do away with his rivals altogether, the artist tries to discredit them in every possible way. Why does the master excommunicate his pupil if he takes one step beyond the limits of his own knowledge; while the pupil is prompted to disown his master, directly he sees that he has squeezed him dry? Why do the old pretend not to see the young, while the young shout after them, 'Hurry up and die'? Why are they all, young and old, great and mediocre, alike cannibals?"

He stopped. Cavalcanti kept silence.

"You cannot explain it, can you?" Alverighi went on. "That 's because you are an American. But I can, for I have been a European enough and to spare. When I at last conceived the happy idea of turning my back on the old world, and putting off for America—would you believe it?—I had already contracted all the migraines of the Mediterranean world. All of them, at twenty-two! Philosophical fever, literary fever, political fever, all the malarial fevers which breed in

the old Greco-Latin marsh: the mad longing to excel, to enjoy, to become great, rich, powerful, celebrated, unique by contrast, amongst all the discords, wars, ruins, and disorder around me. At that tender age I had already been verist and romanticist, mystic and materialist, bigot and atheist, monarchist and socialist. My motive in these changes had been, as usual with Europeans, not love of a principle, but a point of honour, vanity, hatred of the opposite principle and of its advocates, the mad desire to make a career for myself, to seize some well-paid post or to make people talk about me. . . . War is the principle of everything, as Heraclitus said. But Argentina cured my madness. When, a pigmy and a greenhorn, I found myself face to face with the verdant plains, which like a boundless, placid ocean spread their divine calm from one horizon to the other, and then—far from books and chatter, —had to sow, reap, gather, and mow, I began at last to reason. Why chafe, lie, suffer all sorts of privations, be guilty of every kind of perfidy, distract oneself, to win a kingdom of nouns, of voices, of words which have no sense, and of opinions which change like clouds, when there are still so many wide plains waiting for the plough? Can life show a nobler, higher, finer enterprise than the production of riches, that is to say, of 'goods' in the literal sense, which are helpful to the world at large, and bring happiness, contentment, ease, pleasure, and assurance? What has man dreamed of, since the beginning of Time, but the Earthly Paradise, the Promised Land, the Garden of the Hesperides, the Age of Gold, Arabia Felix, one and the same thing under different names: the Empire of Nature and Abundance? And has not the great myth, the wild fantasy of a thousand years, at last taken form and

shape beyond the ocean in those enchanted lands where one plant by itself, lucerne, grain, flax, cotton, coffee, can in a few years, just as in the fable, make a beggar such as I was into a millionaire, a desert and a village into a flourishing state and a splendid city like São Paulo in Brazil! How dare Europe refuse to be convinced, how dare she continue to rage, to hate, to excommunicate, to execrate, to devise torments and outrages, to blight thousands of young lives, as she blighted mine; before she can make up her mind whether the world should be governed in the name of God or in the name of the people, whether classical art is more beautiful than romantic, whether an intelligent person has or has not the right to send Homer and Cicero to Jericho; and which country is worth the most, Great Britain, France, or Germany, three little bits of land which, relatively to our country, you need a lens to discover on the map! And from that day to this, slowly but uninterruptedly, I have gradually recovered my sight; blind as I was, I have begun to see, at first darkly but later more clearly, the world on one side rejoicing and shining like an aurora, on the other pining and growing dark like a sunset; the former singing as she devotes her free energies to the conquest of Abundance, the latter lying torpid and doleful under the tyranny of an oligarchy of jurists, philosophers, men of letters, artists, and theologians. And at last, after infinite effort, trouble, and hesitation, I have to-night found the clue to it all. . . . Yes, thinking over your remarks of the other day, Signor Rosetti, I have at last found the clue. . . . The history of the world was for a time off the track."

But at this point I heard my name called; I turned and saw the Admiral a few yards off, beckoning to me.

"Excuse me for disturbing you," he said as I approached him, "but I particularly want you. Cavalcanti has told you, I believe, all about Mrs. Feldmann's difficulties. . . . Well, it was not your fault, as you had no means of knowing, but those unfortunate statements of yours about divorce in the United States have been a thorn in the poor woman's side for two days past. At this moment she is storming, weeping, and crying that the divorce is already an accomplished fact, that she will not arrive in time, and that she wants to kill herself. I have tried to calm her, but without success, as she insists that I am only telling lies to her out of compassion. Do please come with me, and repeat to her what you said to Cavalcanti."

Reluctant though I was to leave our discussion at its most interesting point, I followed the Admiral up on to the upper deck, where were the state cabins. I found Mrs. Feldmann lying at full length on the bed. She was sobbing quietly, while her maid, Lisetta, with a deprecating look, was trying in vain to make her take a spoonful of something out of a cup she had in her hand. She did not move when we entered; we too were silent for an instant; then the Admiral said:

"Madame, voici Monsieur Ferrero."

Mrs. Feldmann started at the sound of my name, sat up, drawing her skirt over her feet, and, rearranging the combs in her hair and drying her eyes, asked me to forgive her for receiving me in that fashion. I made an appropriate answer, and, while Lisetta withdrew to a corner of the room, I went on to recant my remarks of Saturday night, as the situation demanded of me. I tried to persuade her that a well-known man could not get a divorce in that fashion; that it would make too great a scandal. She listened to me for a while without

stirring; then suddenly shook her head, and said in a disconsolate way:

"A scandal? Why need my husband fear a scandal? Every one else has need of him, and he has need of no one. The bank is all-powerful!"

I tried to prove to her that no one, not even the most powerful banker, could nowadays defy the public and its prejudices beyond a certain point; but all my subtlest arguments failed to convince her. While I was thus talking, with the uncomfortable consciousness that my remarks were making no impression on my hearer, my eyes lit on a white object on the deck at the side of the bed, close by Mrs. Feldmann's feet, which I had not before noticed. I recognised the magnificent pearl necklace which she had worn on that fatal evening, and which had probably dropped off during her attack.

"Somebody will step on them," was the thought which crossed my mind. The discovery increased my discomfort; I could not take my eyes off the pearls, and felt a strong impulse to get up and pick them up. I wondered how Lisetta could be so blind as not to see them. Distracted by this new preoccupation, I refuted the lady's objections more and more weakly, thereby only increasing her distress.

"There 's another crisis coming," I thought; and I was not wrong. Suddenly she cried:

"Who would have thought it a week ago? There was I, waiting for him so calmly and contentedly. And such affectionate letters as he wrote me! Merciful Heaven, I must be dreaming! After twenty-two years of love and happiness, without a shadow, without a suspicion! Can it be possible?"

She stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth, burst into tears, and hid her face in the cushion, sobbing and

crying that her life was shattered, and that a real friend, if she had one, would get her some strychnine. The Admiral went quickly to her side, and the maid too came forward, thus covering the necklace on the deck with her skirt. It was a pitiful scene; but I confess that I was moved less by Mrs. Feldmann's tears than by the dread of hearing at any moment the scrunch of the pearls under the maid's foot. Meanwhile Lisetta persisted in her effort to get her mistress to drink the medicine, but she would not. At last Lisetta drew back a step, and, catching sight of the pearls, kicked them under the bed with her toe. I breathed again; but I could not help thinking that the maids of millionairesses—or of what pass for such—treat jewels with singular indifference. Mrs. Feldmann was now becoming gradually calmer, under the influence of the Admiral's consoling words, which were more effective than my own. He reminded her, gently but with almost paternal authority, of the happy life she and her husband had lived together for so many years, and exhorted her not to despair as if the divorce had already been pronounced, when it was not even certain that her husband had any intention of divorcing her; for the despatch spoke of a rumour, and there were so many false reports in circulation nowadays. Even if his reasoning did not convince her, she was affected by his reminiscences. She sat up again, assented to certain remarks by the Admiral, and at last said:

"Certainly he must be mad, if he has done anything of the sort. If only your father-in-law were here," she added, turning to me, "he could advise me what to do."

Freed from anxiety about the pearls, I discussed insanity and its forms for a short while, as best I could. She asked me then:

"Do you understand about insanity?"

"I do not," I answered. "But my wife is a doctor; you ought to ask her."

So we went on talking more and more quietly about various things. I kept asking myself why Mrs. Feldmann, who, as the Admiral had proved so convincingly, had so little to fear, was so much agitated and worried. I wondered whether she was speaking the truth when she asserted that a divorce would mean the sudden rupture of a union which had lasted for so many years without a cloud or a misunderstanding. If she was, it was indeed an extraordinary case. At last, when she seemed to us really to have quieted down, we retired.

It was close on midnight. I went up on deck to see if Alverighi, Cavalcanti, and Rosetti were still there. The deck was empty. Almost two hours had passed while we were talking to Mrs. Feldmann; and two hours must have been enough to see the end of the discussion, or rather of Alverighi's discourse. I leaned for a moment on the bulwarks and raised my eyes to the starry vault. . . . Suddenly for the first time in the depths of the darkness I caught sight of the Great Bear, shining and seeming to smile quietly at me like an old friend whom I had met unexpectedly. I felt a sudden emotion. The great constellation of the northern hemisphere seemed to me the herald of the dear ones, the friends, and the fatherland to which I was drawing near; the herald of that Mediterranean Sea on which it had shone since the beginning of time, and which the glib Alverighi had described as the home of fevers and miasma.

PART II

CHAPTER I

HOW and when the history of the world had gone off the track was explained to me by Rosetti about nine o'clock next morning. I had slept late, and had first of all recounted to my wife the conversation and the scene of the night before. I had then gone on deck and gazed at the east, shimmering in a film of cloud; at the sun, which, though already high in the heavens and scorching hot, had not yet entirely rent asunder the veil of silver mist in which it often wraps itself on rising from its bed in tropical seas; at the river of fire which from the horizon flowed glittering towards the *Cordova* on the blue ocean. On deck I exchanged a few remarks with the passengers on the subject of the equator, which we were due to pass that day, discussing our chance of doing so, and the time at which we should reach it. At last I had found Rosetti, on the starboard side of the upper deck.

"Where did you get to yesterday evening?" he asked as soon as he saw me.

I knew I could trust him; so I told him everything.

"What a pity!" he exclaimed, when I had finished. "You missed the eulogy of Columbus."

It seems that the history of the world had been off the track right up to the discovery of America, and

that it was Christopher Columbus who had put it on the right track again. Rosetti told me that, after I had gone, Alverighi had hovered majestically for a quarter of an hour over the abyss of the centuries; that he had gone so far as to assert that right up to the time of the French Revolution men had put the cart before the horse, intent on trying to make the world beautiful and good before they understood or even possessed it altogether, trying, in fact, to set their house in order and decorate it before it was built. He had quoted the history of the world, from Greece, which taught the world to wield chisel and pen, up to the Middle Ages, which had built cathedrals and palaces in the most fantastic and multiform styles of architecture ever known; from the Egypt of the Ptolemies, whence the last rays of Hellenic beauty had shone on the wealthy houses of the Mediterranean world, up to Papal Rome and to Venice, which had decked their power and pride in marbles, silks, and velvets, and up to the France of the eighteenth century, three successive sovereigns of which had won eternal fame by imposing their several styles of decorative art on the world; from Augustus, who had protected Horace and Virgil and rebuilt in marble the ancient city of brick, up to Louis XIV, the protector of Racine and Molière, and to the Marquise de Pompadour, who had striven to make Paris the Metropolis of Taste. Why—had then asked Alverighi—had the perpetuation of a form of beauty been the greatest ambition and aspiration of all the potentates of the past who had been worthy of their high estate? Because when peoples, cities, and sovereigns vied in embellishing the tiny territories in which each lived, even one single art, painting or sculpture or architecture for instance, could be for a people

the source of much gain, and a copious fount of prestige. Consequently the State, the Church, the rulers, the prominent families had strained every nerve to impose this or that art on the admiration of the world. But all that began to change, when at last, at the close of the fifteenth century, had appeared the man to whom Alverighi had applied the epithet of superdivine: Christopher Columbus. Christopher Columbus did not discover America only, but presented a second time to man the terrestrial globe which God had already given him, in that he made him at last to get to know it. "At every step forward that Columbus moved on the face of the waters," Alverighi had said in semi-biblical language, "the world had grown a mile larger under the feet of men." Christopher Columbus's enterprise, in short, taught man in the end the duty of exploring and conquering the whole planet. But with the growth of the earth before his eyes man felt himself grow smaller; hence his determination, timid at first but growing stronger and bolder as it proceeded, to match his powers to the enlarged expanse of the world, with the creation of science and machinery. The conquest of the earth by means of science and machinery was then the next great exploit, which under the name of progress galvanised the history of the world after the discovery of America, and a gradual but inevitable effect of this rehabilitation of history had been that no human authority troubled itself any more about imposing on mankind any model of beauty; every man was given liberty to evolve for himself his own model, his own standard, and his own criterion; and even to judge New York to be the most beautiful city in the world! Many men were not yet aware that the chains of this ancient spiritual servitude had fallen from their arms, and con-

tinued in docile submission to a tyrant who exists no longer. For this reason Rosetti had persuaded himself that even to-day men demand a mentor and a tyrant in matters of art. But who did not know that all the authorities of the world always survive their own death for a certain time in the apprehension of men?

"Our lawyer-friend," I said laughing, "might aspire to a chair in historical philosophy. But I suppose that all these fine theories have only been concocted for the purpose of replying to you and to what you said the other evening."

"Exactly," Rosetti answered with a smile. "He must have been thinking out his answer during the two days he has kept out of the way."

"And what did you and Cavalcanti answer?" I asked.

"At this juncture we separated. It was late; and we had not been spending the evening, like you, consoling fair ladies."

At this point, my wife came up and told me that she had just come from a visit to Mrs. Feldmann, who had sent her a message a short time before begging her to come up to her cabin, as she was indisposed and wished to see her. Then she hesitated as if uncertain whether to speak out before Rosetti; but I told her that Rosetti knew everything there was to know. She then told us that Mrs. Feldmann had begun by asking her whether love could be converted into hatred by suggestion. She had then questioned her about madness, softening of the brain, old age and its effect, confessing that she had always had doubts about the complete soundness of her husband's brain, though she could not explain them. Perhaps she had never succeeded in understanding the disposition and

temperament of her husband, who was a peculiar man. Only once, when listening years ago to a lecture of mine on "Nero," before the Société de Géographie, had she seemed to catch a glimpse of her husband in the weak, capricious, unbalanced emperor, corrupted by flattery, power, riches, and the absence of contradiction.

I smiled at the idea of a jealous woman not hesitating to compare an American banker to Nero. We talked over these revelations, which seemed to me somewhat to belie the protestations of the evening before about the unbroken harmony of the Feldmanns' married life. But while we were talking, Alverighi suddenly came down on us like a whirlwind, as usual, with a book under his arm, rigged out all in white and looking smart and fresh.

"Ferrero!" he cried, as soon as he caught sight of me. "Why did you go off last night at the most interesting point in our discussion? Can you spare a few minutes now? I want to repeat to you what I said."

But I only just had time to tell him that I had already heard it, when the first luncheon bell rang, and we all hurried off to our cabins. We met a quarter of an hour later in the dining-room. Cavalcanti and the Admiral, whom I had not yet seen that morning, were there, but Mrs. Feldmann did not appear. We started with a desultory conversation about the impending crossing of the equator.

"When shall we enter the northern hemisphere?"

"This afternoon," the captain replied to our insistent questions.

We all hoped—I don't know why—that it would be soon, about midday. Meanwhile we all indulged in reminiscences. Cavalcanti was melancholy and full

of pensive regrets, as he always was when he approached the equator; because at the moment of leaving his native hemisphere, he saw again, as in a mirage, the marvellous equatorial landscapes of his native land. But the Admiral said to me laughingly:

"You need n't be afraid! He 'll forget the forests of the Amazon and the splendours of the tropics, as soon as he takes a walk in the Bois de Boulogne. All Brazilians do."

Cavalcanti smiled, but went rambling on:

"I love the blue gleam of the sea at the equator. It reminds me of the loveliest sea in the world, the Mediterranean in summer. This is a real Greco-Latin sea . . . a sea fit for the sons of Greece and of Rome to cross on their way to conquer Brazil and Argentina. But do you remember the North Atlantic, Ferrero? Always rainy, windy, grey, and rough. . . . A regular sea for Vikings, a pathway for the hardy stock which has peopled the United States, but too rough for us scions of the ancient races."

Here Alverighi broke in:

"I on the other hand shall be to-day crossing the navel of the earth, as a modern Homer would say, for the twelfth time. And every time, here on the border of the two hemispheres, in the blaze of the tropics, I feel myself filled with a great joy, an exaltation, an indescribable divine intoxication; I feel like an all-powerful king, a giant of immeasurable might, a demigod. . . . Yes, a demigod! When I think of those tiny midgets among whom Julius Cæsar and Dante lived, who, crawling about for so many centuries like moles in their Mediterranean hole, never even arrived at an idea of how great the world is! And when on the other hand I consider myself, dining quietly in this floating iron

castle, between America, Africa, and Europe, in the middle of this boundless plain of water, which no human eye had seen since the beginning of the centuries, which had been the wild kingdom of the wind and the sun until four hundred years ago. . . . No; we who have been born since the discovery of America, in the age of machines, no longer belong to the same race as that which first peopled the world; we are a super-humanity."

"All the same we shall never write a second *Divina Commedia*," said Cavalcanti with a sigh.

"Never mind!" answered Alverighi quietly. "Will that be a great misfortune, if we go on and conquer the earth?"

We looked at each other, and "It 's Dante's turn to-day" was the thought which occurred to every one.

But Alverighi smiled complacently.

"I shock you, don't I? But let us be honest. Is there a single one of you who would be ready to give up and do without a single one of the conveniences of to-day—the postal service for instance—in return for the birth of a new Dante to compose another Comedy, human or divine? Do you really think that it is any use nowadays lamenting and complaining because some extraordinary genius no longer succeeds in bringing his immortal masterpiece to life in the solitude of his pride, when man invents machines of ever-increasing power and conquers the earth, the sea, and the air, and with these miraculous tools in his hands sees in himself the wizard visioned in the legends of centuries? When the masses demand bread and cheese, education, leisure, security, pleasures, air, light, liberty, and all the blessings of God, is it enough to offer them verses and pictures? Must we not offer them money, and lands,

and mines, and machines—machines of greater power, speed, and ingenuity every year?"

"And thus make insatiable barbarians of them?" interrupted my wife at this point, suddenly and concisely.

All turned towards her in some surprise, particularly at the sharp and almost violent tone of her voice. But Alverighi, apparently not immediately conscious of the flank attack which was threatening him, answered quietly:

"Barbarians? On the contrary, thus building up a wiser, more powerful, and richer civilisation."

"More prodigal and more insane. No sooner had the French Revolution freed him from the tyranny of the State and Church, than man made himself the slave of machines."

"Man the slave of machines?" asked Alverighi in surprise.

"Certainly. When we have made them, there 's no getting out of it, we must keep them going at all costs, or they will rust. And if we have no use for their products, so much the worse for us. For it is not the machines which serve our wants, but our wants which have to serve the machines."

"But, Signora," answered Alverighi, "you cannot wish to reproach our times with the improvement in the condition of the masses? To blame them, because the people have something to eat, and something to put on, and live in better ventilated houses, and contract a certain amount of familiarity with soap?"

"Leo's little toe!" answered Gina drily; and turning to me, added: "You remember the story?"

I nodded, and laughed; but the others did not understand, and asked my wife to explain.

"A year or two ago," she said, "when we were at the seaside our boy saw some of his friends wearing some sandals which took his fancy immensely, and he wanted a pair himself. But he had to wait some days until they were ready—long days of anxious expectation. At last they arrived. I saw at once that the toe cap of the right sandal did not come far enough back to cover his little toe, which therefore stuck out. 'Nonsense! They fit splendidly!' he cried, and off he went skipping and shouting like a madman, to show them to his friends. For a while he shouted and skipped and showed off; but when the first transports were over, he began to feel his toe hurting him. For some time he stood it, but at last he could hold out no longer, and he came to me the next day, and said with the utmost seriousness: 'I say, mummy, these sandals are a splendid fit; but my little toe is too short.' We are nowadays as much in love with our machines as Leo was with his sandals: every day we attribute to ourselves their defects; we accuse the toe of being too short because the toe cap is not long enough. If they produce too much, it is n't their fault, it 's ours, because we are contented with too little! Though they drive us on to work and to live at such a pace that we tire ourselves out and lose our breath, it is not the machines which are running as if possessed, it is we who are sluggards. Does any one suggest that they are destroying traditions, propagating vice, dissolving family ties? What an idea! of course it is we who are antediluvian, haters of innovation, and enemies to progress! The little toe is too short!"

By now we had all, including Alverighi, forgotten Dante and the equator. But no one could understand the reason for the sudden entry into the discussion of a

new champion eager to defend so bold a theory. I saw that some explanation of my wife's remarks and allusions was required; so I explained to the others that my wife some years back had done some research work on the subject of machinery, with results which had, so to speak, scared her father and myself; for her conclusions tended to show that machinery did its work at greater cost to society than manual labour, and that the progress made in mechanical industry was a calamity, particularly for poor countries. Her father and I had discussed these theories at great length with her, as well as the facts on which they rested, but to no purpose. At last these discussions, helped perhaps by some grave difficulties which had cropped up in connection with some of the more doubtful points of the question, had had the effect of inducing her to pigeon-hole her voluminous note-books.

"Even now she fires up," I concluded, "if she hears machines mentioned. Take care, Signor; you don't know what a risk you are running."

My story only served to whet the curiosity of the others, who were amazed at the originality of my wife's thesis, and had quite forgotten the topics we had been discussing before her intervention. They all begged my wife to expound her theory.

"Please go on, Signora," said Rosetti with a smile of encouragement. "Let me see if you can convince me, who have spent half my life teaching mechanics."

Gina, who had finished luncheon, was leaning, with her hands folded, against the back of her chair, smiling, in an embarrassed way, as if she were conscious of having launched out rather too impetuously. At last she made up her mind and began, hesitatingly at first, but more easily as she warmed to her subject.

"Do you want to know my opinion of machinery? I find it difficult to explain it in a few words. . . . I am referring especially to modern machines, the pride of our times, whose motive agent is steam or electricity. Very well; why, when we have constructed them, do we forget that they are the work of our hands and bow the knee before them? Because they produce riches more quickly and in greater profusion than hands. Is that not so? But it is easy, then, to deduce the conditions precedent to the use of machines, if they are to be really of service to us. The first condition is an abundance of raw material, or there will be nothing for the machines to transform. The second an abundance of capital, for a great deal is required to construct them and set them going. The third, that there should be a great and urgent demand for the object manufactured, a real dearth, I might say; otherwise there can be no reason for manufacturing so large a quantity at such speed, expense, and trouble. Have I made myself clear? The word I used was dearth. But can a dearth be permanent, lasting, and continuous? I should say no; for in some way or other, sooner or later, whatever be the object required, demand and supply must ultimately balance each other. . . . Either the means of satisfying the demand increase, or the demand disappears. I cannot see any way of avoiding the dilemma. Well then, machinery, by all the laws of common-sense, can be of service only in times of extraordinary dearth, to satisfy in a short time a great and pressing demand. For it to be of continual service we should have to have a permanent dearth."

My wife's premises had been perfectly clear to every one; not so her conclusions.

"A permanent dearth?" said Alverighi. "But even

now I do not understand. You have said yourself that dearth cannot be lasting."

"Machinery makes abundance, not dearth," observed the Admiral.

"That too," answered Gina, "is a very obscure point, which it is difficult to explain. Perhaps I ought to summarise the history of machinery."

She paused; then, addressing the Admiral, continued deliberately: "What, do you suppose, is the reason why the great mechanical industry came into being in England, and at the end of the eighteenth century?"

"Because up to that time," answered Alverighi instead of the Admiral, "no other people had been intelligent and bold enough to initiate such a revolution. America will always acknowledge England's right to this feather in her cap, even when she has wrested her industrial pre-eminence from her."

"Then how do you explain the fact, that up to the second half of the eighteenth century no European people was more hostile to machinery than England? The government prohibited its use, and the workers broke it up. Why did England wait till 1770–1790 for conversion, and when it came, start spinning and weaving by machinery, not wool, for instance, which was in England an ancient national art, but cotton, which was an Indian art? 'Indian chintzes, bengalines, calico,' that is to say, Calcutta; the very names clearly show the origin, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of the cotton stuffs which were used in Europe and in the American colonies. France and Holland were the nations who had the greatest trade in their goods with India; not England, which indeed had tried from time to time to prohibit her subjects from using cotton stuffs, for the sake of protecting her

national stuffs. . . . Then in that space of twenty years England conquers Holland, and France's hands are tied by the Revolution. England therefore is left mistress of the seas, and we see her all at once execute her sudden right-about-turn. Why? England has never shown too much originality. She generally leaves others to experiment, but compensates herself by her resoluteness in seizing the right moment when it comes. England perceived that the machines she had always disliked so much, and described as dreams of distorted ingenuity, could be of service to her at that precise, fleeting moment, if she could seize it, in helping her to despoil India of that ancient art of hers, and to conquer in a few years the markets of America and of Europe, which had been till then clients of India. She at once imposed enormous duties on the export of woven fabrics from India, she obliged the Indians to sell her raw cotton, and she abolished all the restrictions previously laid on cotton. By these drastic steps she emptied, and caused a dearth in, the markets of Europe and of America, and monopolised the raw material. At the same time she extolled the despised inventors of machines to the skies, and encouraged them with prizes of every sort, bringing to light a Watt and an Arkwright amongst others. She multiplied spinning machines, and bound men and women, old men and children to the loom, by day and by night, in the cities and in the country, in their homes and in factories. She racked her brains to invent every sort of machine; and in a few years the importation of raw cotton and the exportation of stuffs increased fourfold, if my memory serves me right. In 1815, when the whirlwind of revolution was spent, the world was surprised to find itself saddled with this new monster—the great mechani-

cal industry—which had been born in the middle of the tempest. One of the most awful convulsions in history had suddenly spewed it up into the world. . . . It should by rights have disappeared when the world quieted down again; because, after all, the object of this great effort had been to exploit a momentary, unusual, almost unparalleled situation, which could neither last nor repeat itself. . . . Instead of this the monster not only lived, but propagated its kind."

At this moment our own, or rather the *Cordova's* machinery, emitted a harsh, deep, furious whistle.

"The equator," we all cried, jumping up—all, that is to say, except the captain, who, quietly laying down his napkin, smiled and shook his head, while the stewards deferentially contradicted us.

"It 's only noon."

But the sudden whistle had put an end to the conversation. No one resumed his seat, but we all moved towards the door. We then went to the starboard side, and waited for the mate to come and mark the run on the chart. But alas! we had only reached 1° 29′ lat. and 30° 11′ long., so there was no hope, the mate told us, of crossing the line before evening. The heat was tremendous. Over the sun was stretched a thin and glowing veil of vapour. In the immense circle of the horizon the clouds were piled up into mountains, grey at the base, and dazzling at the summit. The brilliance of sea and sky seemed to be dimmed by the veiled and clouded atmosphere which hung heavily over the ocean. One by one we retired to our cabins for the siesta, after agreeing to continue the discussion about machinery that evening at dinner.

My wife had often repeated to me that in this century one can deny God, fatherland, or family, but not ma-

chinery; that to entertain doubt about machinery would seem as wildly daring an attitude as to assail the rotation of the earth or the immobility of the sun. I lay in my bunk thinking that she had been right after all. Her unpremeditated interruption had been enough to start a fresh discussion, even keener and more animated than its predecessors.

CHAPTER II

THEY had not the patience to wait for the evening, as had been arranged, before renewing the discussion. When, after spending a few minutes arranging my papers, I went out about half-past four on to the promenade deck, I found my wife, Cavalcanti, Rosetti, and Alverighi sitting in a circle and already going for each other hammer and tongs. Cavalcanti was saying in a rather resentful tone to Alverighi, who was listening to him in grim silence:

"Shall we ever see again the stuffs, the lace, the furniture, the books, or the knick-knacks our grandfathers produced? When I look at our furniture, our gold and silver ornaments, and the clothes we put on; if I find myself in a sumptuous hotel or in a bank or in a big liner, and notice its false marble and common gold decorations; when, in the upper saloon, I look at the coarse plaster figures which are by way of embellishing it, or in the smoking-room at the gold flowers on a red ground which adorn the walls—I feel inclined to laugh. The marbles and statues and jewel-work of the later Empire come back to me. Do you remember, Ferrero, how they look beside the exquisite masterpieces of the first and second centuries? No, no. Machinery wafts us across the stormy seas; it is the portent, the marvel, and the glory of our times. I 'll not be the one to deny that, I assure you. But machinery has at the

same time made a clearance of the beauties which embellished every hour of life for the ancients. . . . Analyse the history of cotton, as told by Signora Ferrero, and what do you get? India has been spoiled, ravaged, and robbed in a few years of her ancient and noble art by the barbarians of Europe with their machinery. India created that art; and the barbarians have wrested it from her by main force. Is that progress? No; in other things our epoch may show progress; but increasing ugliness is a mark of decadence."

At this point Rosetti intervened:

"Suppose we bring a little order into our discussion? Signora Ferrero began by explaining how modern machinery is the offspring of a kind of gigantic combination, if it be remembered that among the incidents of this combination was nothing less than the French Revolution. And you interrupted her to discuss whether machinery had been beneficial or the opposite. . . . Would it not be better first of all to ascertain why the expedient of a moment has taken such deep root? We can then discuss the effects of machinery, and progress too, if you like."

"I 've already told you why," said Gina hesitatingly, "a short time ago. Because the world was dazzled by England's success with her cotton. Because there were people in every country who hoped to get rich by inventing or constructing machines. Because, in Europe and in America, the force of tradition had been weakened by the Revolution and the wars that succeeded it. Because there was America, immense and half-desert. Because everywhere people wished, under the pretext of making progress, to feather their own nests."

"To live no longer in misery and ignorance, you mean," said Alverighi.

"I mean to say that, ever since the world began, it has always been held to be a virtue for a man to know how to moderate his own desires, not to encourage them unduly. . . . There was a time when simplicity was the virtue of saints and heroes. But that was a hundred years ago. Now machinery is bent on making man into an insatiable animal at all costs. In order that the machines may not be left with nothing to do, every one tries nowadays to persuade the people that their first and most sacred duty is to eat, drink, smoke, travel about, feast, squander all they can, and ape the vices of the rich. It 's progress, forsooth, that demands it!"

"The corruption of the ancients has become the progress of the moderns," observed the Admiral, "as your husband proved to us in the first of his lectures at Rio."

"Yes. But he did not venture to tell us that the cause of this upset, this reversal, to borrow your expression, Signor Alverighi, is machinery; machinery which must needs effectuate the impossible contradiction of a permanent dearth. And yet to me it seems quite clear. We think we are cleverer than our forefathers, because we construct machines and they did not. But do you think, Signor Alverighi, that great knowledge and superhuman genius are required to construct machines? What about the founder of the great mechanical industry, Arkwright, who was a barber? The ancients knew more mechanics than we credit them with; yet they did not construct many machines, and what they did, were nearly all for military purposes. This was because they succeeded with their hands in meeting their still moderate wants; and besides, the

strange idea never occurred to any one of spending so much money and trouble on the construction of rough hands of wood and iron."

"But," objected the Admiral, "is not machinery the effect rather than the cause of this universal increase of desires?"

"Partly the effect, partly the cause. Things always happen like that. . . . As a matter of fact there were several contributory causes. To repeat what I said before, the French Revolution and its wars had slackened, in Europe and America, every rein: religion, tradition, and good sense. Without the French Revolution we should probably not have had the great mechanical industry. But machinery is the child of disorder, and propagates it. For consider one minute: every one knows that that great industry enriches a few, and ruins many others, that it always oscillates between fat years and years of disaster. . . . Why? The good years are the years of dearth, when things are sold at a high price; the man who strikes one of these makes a fortune. But the years in which prices fall, because machinery has produced a temporary abundance, are mediocre or bad years; if a man strikes one of these, so much the worse for him! Nay more, machinery is always contradicting itself, because, when it manufactures much and quickly, it makes abundance; vice versa, it only prospers in times of dearth. That is the resson why the great modern industry is always busy driving out of the world the abundance it has itself produced, to make a permanent dearth while multiplying riches. The paradox is an impossible one, as you can see. To effectuate it, the industry has recourse to the most absurd expedients and entangles itself in the most extraordinary contradictions: trusts, syndicates,

monopolies, protective tariffs, premiums on exports, the conquest of colonies, extravagance, feasting, luxury, perpetual movement, imposed, as a more sacred duty than honouring father and mother, on every one, even on those who only wish to live in peace, like the Turks. In short, the craze for luxury sweeps over the world in ever-growing waves. Each new wave is accompanied by a few years of passing dearth, which are the years in which prices are high and many fortunes are made. Thus every one has done his best to gnaw the reins of our desires; they have gnawed and gnawed, till by now the reins are nearly all broken through. Reason left the world, when machinery entered it."

"And beauty went with her," added Cavalcanti.

"But machinery brought with her riches, culture, and liberty," said Alverighi, in a tone of assurance. "If the men of to-day do spend a good deal, they at any rate work hard . . . they produce what they consume."

The answer to this was easy.

"They produce, but they waste too. It must not be forgotten that one reason why we are so rich is because, instead of exploiting America in a reasonable way, we are simply sacking its mines, forests, and lands. . . . Madmen that we are, we are devouring what the economists call the 'hedonistic capitals,' the natural riches which admit of no renewal."

"Devouring, sacking! Strong words those, Signora!" answered Alverighi. "But let us suppose that they are justified. It does not fall to every one to go to Corinth[1]—I beg your pardon, I mean to sack a con-

[1] The allusion is to Hor., Ep., 1, 17, 36: "Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum," referring to difficult attainment which only good fortune or wealth can achieve. The Greek version, *οὐ παντὶς ἀνδρὸς εἰς Κόρινθόν ἐσθ' ὁ πλοῦς*, is found in Strabo, 8, 6, 20.

tinent. . . . Perhaps we are sacking the two Americas. You may go so far as to say that we are sacking the immense territories of Russia; I am not afraid to confess it. And don't forget either that we are beginning to sack Africa, and shall sack it, please God, a good deal more in the future. So much the better; for by sacking we make money and progress. . . . But to sum up, is it true or is it not, that we are now lords, in a wholesale way, if you like, but lords all the same, of the whole earth, while three or four centuries back we knew scarcely a small portion of it? Is it true or is it not, that with our eyes, our thoughts, and our calculations we stalk through the infinite and penetrate into the molecules of matter and the bowels of nature? Is it true or is it not, that with our machines we have swallowed up space and lengthened time, in spite of envious and jealous nature, which had given us legs that were too short, a body that was too heavy, and arms that were too weak? Is it true or is it not, that we have laid bare the most secret snares of disease? Is it true or is it not, that we fly like birds and travel under water like fishes? Can all this or can it not be called progress? And should we have conquered in so short a time earth, the infinite, and the invisible world, if what you stigmatise as the fury of man's ambitions and wishes, coupled with the heaven-sent aid of machinery, had not carried us to the ends of the world?"

Alverighi's arguments seemed to shake Gina's confidence for a moment, and she answered rather lamely:

"But to judge of an epoch it is not sufficient to consider its works; one must also ask oneself whether the ideas and sentiments that inspire it are noble, lofty, and reasonable."

"And what fault have you to find with our century?" asked Alverighi quickly.

"I call it an upstart century."

"An upstart century?" asked Alverighi. "Why? Because it believes in progress?"

"Exactly. That same popular fiction of progress is the mirror in front of which all upstarts preen themselves: men, nations, and cities. What I cannot stand in the modern world are the nations, countries, and civilisations which call themselves young, progressive, and new. Once upon a time, when it was men who worked and not machines, a civilisation was the work and the glory of centuries—centuries of education, of long-drawn-out efforts, and of indefatigable labour. But in those times, to make up, every civilisation reached a real maturity. . . . What happens now? Thanks to machinery and America and progress and a hundred other fine novelties even civilisations are improvised nowadays. It is only necessary to discover mines of coal and iron, to possess a vast tract of land and a little capital. If there is a dearth of population, recourse is had to overpopulated countries. First iron is manufactured, then, with iron, all sorts of machines, beginning with railways; then with the machines every sort of stuff, in both senses of the word, in profusion and at break-neck speed. Just a few inventors and capitalists are all that are wanted; of the masses who work the machines neither education nor culture, nor even knowledge of the language of the country is required. . . . In a few years the country will overflow with riches; and since nowadays men have so many needs, and to satisfy them (as you say, only too truly) requires metals, grain, clothes, meat, and machines, not art, literature, religion, justice, discipline, and morality, every one will

look with admiration on that land of abundance as the model of progress, the pattern of civilisation, in the sense in which the word is used nowadays. And so an 'omnium gatherum' of men crazy on making money finds one fine day that it is a great people. Can we wonder that it gets intoxicated with pride, fancies that it can reform the universe, in a word, persuades itself that the world begins with itself? But, on the contrary, the world is ancient, very ancient, more ancient than the young nations think, and it does not require to be modernised afresh every thirty years. . . . Please don't laugh. It is true that North America is the creature of machinery, and therefore——"

Here she stopped, seeing the smile of triumph that lit up Alverighi's face.

"There we are at last!" he cried. "Truth has spoken. It has been some time about it, but it has spoken at last, clearly and ingenuously, through your mouth, Signora. That is the precise point; because modern times are more favourable to America than to Europe, Europe would like to sail back against the current of the times. Because America with her superior machines can play the same dirty trick on Europe as Europe played on the East with her elementary machines, down with machinery! Because in the machine-wrought civilisation the power of that intellectual oligarchy, which from Europe flooded half the world with its delusions, finds its grave, the world forsooth is relapsing into barbarism! You are right in saying that it is machines, and especially railways, that have made contemporary America. Argentina, Brazil, and the United States would still be deserts without the railways and the countless number of agricultural and industrial machines which have been

invented in the last hundred years. That is just the reason why we Americans worship machinery, because it is machinery which enables us to reap the fruits of our boundless territories in all their length, breadth, and depth. With its help we can extract riches, more riches, and again more riches: a river, a flood, an ocean of riches which will cover the world and bury all the monuments of past civilisations."

"No doubt about it," interrupted Cavalcanti with a sigh. "But in the meantime on the shores of the Mediterranean, Athens, Constantinople, Ephesus, Alexandria, Rome, Venice, Florence, the mothers and mistresses of our civilisation, bow their heads, grow old, fall into ruin, empty themselves, and are turned into inns and brothels, while on the other side of the Atlantic the factory-cities, the monstrous prodigies, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, triumphantly rear to the heavens their sky-scrapers and their smoky chimneys."

"You should add," answered Alverighi promptly, with ironical politeness, "that the whole of Europe is preparing to put up for auction and to liquidate that ancient civilisation of hers of which she is so proud, or at any rate that part of it which still is of some value, and to take from America in exchange iron, grain, cotton, petroleum, wool——"

But the phrase was greeted with a regular storm.

"You see, I was right after all!" said Gina. "Machinery does ruin poor countries."

"Man's needs are not confined to bales of cotton and to frozen meat," protested Cavalcanti. "A civilisation does not live by bread alone."

"A fine civilisation, forsooth," interrupted my wife, "in which it is worth more for a nation to possess coal-mines than an ancient tradition of culture. There

was a time, at any rate, when intelligence governed the world, when splendid civilisations flourished even in poor and sterile countries."

At this point Rosetti again intervened:

"Excuse me if I interrupt you again; but it occurs to me that in this discussion, as in nearly all other discussions, there is some misunderstanding. You think that you are discussing machinery, but in reality you are discussing progress over again. Once before, without knowing it, you tumbled on to this particularly thorny topic. And you have tumbled on to it again, because each one of you, in speaking of machines and their effects on the world, hypothesises a different definition of progress. Signora Ferrero accuses machinery of making the world worse instead of better, because it eradicates certain virtues and cultivates in their stead certain vices, such as prodigality, intemperance, and egoism; in other words, she judges progress by a moral standard. Cavalcanti on the contrary thinks that the world as it progresses should become also more beautiful. He then judges progress by an æsthetic standard, according to which machinery, in some aspects, at any rate, is reducing the world to barbarism. . . . You on the other hand, Signor Alverighi, seem to me to assume that the increase of power and of riches is of itself progress; your standard is therefore an economic one. How can we expect to understand each other if we all speak a different language? You are fighting a duel with swords at twenty paces apart. If we hope to reach a conclusion, we must discuss this other question: What is progress?"

"There 's no difficulty about that," answered Alverighi promptly. "Progress is the conquest of the earth."

"The conquest of the earth? as an end in itself? No; I cannot accept that definition," said Cavalcanti. "If beauty is a good, progress ought to increase it just as much as other goods; and any epoch which banishes beauty as a thing of shame cannot be said to progress."

"But who gives you leave to say," asked Alverighi, "that the world of to-day is uglier than the world of yesterday?"

Cavalcanti paused a moment in surprise; then, with a shrug, said sarcastically:

"Presumably you consider that these machine-made clothes of ours, for instance, are not more ugly than the clothes worn in the eighteenth century?"

How this strange discussion would have ended I cannot say. At this moment we caught sight of Signor Vazquez, calm, neat, and dignified, smoking a Havana as fat as the fingers that held it. He greeted us, and took an empty seat, saying with a laugh:

"Always philosophy! The *Cordova* will be called the 'Ark of Wisdom.' The unfortunate part of it is that Signor Alverighi there has resigned himself to a thorough holiday. He promised me to write, on board here, the report which I have to present to the Paris bankers, in connection with a big job we have on hand in the province of Mendoza. But instead of that he does nothing but read, think, and discuss."

Cavalcanti answered jokingly that Alverighi was at the moment expounding to us things more grave and weighty than the weightiest and gravest affairs of earth. But Vazquez was unmoved.

"I allow him a holiday," he said, "as far as Gibraltar. But from Gibraltar onwards I shall want him for serious business. Besides he 'll have plenty of time to philosophise, in an old 'bus like this! Twenty

days to go from Buenos Aires to Genoa! *Es una enormidad.*"

We pointed out to him that coal was more expensive on the southern than on the northern tracks. But he would not budge.

"No, no. I shall live to travel from Buenos Aires to Genoa in ten days, I 'm sure of it. If it is n't coal, it 'll be petrol, or electricity, or the hydroplane; or some other wonder. But something there will be. I believe in progress."

"Like all Americans," I remarked.

He nodded, and took two long pulls at his cigar; then said:

"Ten years ago, on a voyage to Europe, we put into Bahia, and there I saw my first electric tramway. You can imagine my feelings. Why, Buenos Aires even then had nothing but horse-trams! Now these ten years have shown you what we are capable of. We have the finest electric-tram service in the world; even Paris envies us it, with those old horse-'buses of hers."

He paused a moment as if in thought, then turned to me, and said with a smile:

"Is n't it a curious thing? To have produced the French Revolution, and still to have horse-trams?"

Somewhat surprised at this remark, I asked him whether a Paris encumbered with wires and poles would be more beautiful in his eyes. He did not answer me, but pursued his line of thought.

"Argentina is so prosperous because everything new which is produced in the world we at once adopt. We are a progressive people, we are!"

He drew out his watch.

"Half-past five," he said. "We have time for a rubber before dinner, Alverighi. Cut in, if you care to.

If you don't, you 'll find crossing the line extremely boring."

Alverighi could not deny his polite and wealthy friend this little pleasure; so the party broke up. I was left with the conviction that Vazquez had got as near the kernel of the question of progress as any of us, for all our arguments. And in this he showed himself characteristically American.

The equator was the cause of unusual excitement throughout the ship. The passengers came back and back again to study the chart; asked each other in turn at what time we should cross the line; questioned the officers, stewards, cooks, and even the scullions, although they had all already repeated "This evening" ten times to one passenger or another. They watched the sky and the sea, as if they expected to see in them some announcement or sudden change. It was no good; the *Cordova* pounded along on the ocean at her regular calm pace. To pass the time, one of the wine-merchants was poking fun at the São Paulo doctor's wife, persuading her that if she watched the sea attentively through a particular telescope, she would see the "line." All the passengers by turns went and peeped into the dining-saloon, to see the preparations for the feast that evening, the while confiding to each other the various rumours which were flying about. One of them was that Mrs. Feldmann would wear that evening a famous tiara worth two million francs! Meeting the Admiral by himself, I asked him—as he had known the Feldmanns a long time—if he really thought that the divorce would fall suddenly, like the guillotine-knife, on the poor woman's head, as she supposed. He answered that, so far as he knew, the couple lived harmoniously together; that every one considered them a

happy couple, and many people were rather jealous of their happiness. He therefore was inclined to consider the divorce rumour a false one, though he could not explain how it had arisen. But for some reason—perhaps because I was mistrustful—the Admiral's remarks seemed to me to be rather guarded.

Little by little the sultry day ebbed away in the desert sea. But dinner came sooner than the equator, and it was rather a sulky crowd of revilers of the unapproachable equator that met at table in full evening dress. The last to appear was Mrs. Feldmann, whom I had not seen before that day, fresh and bright as usual, wearing, not the famous tiara, but the pearl necklace which had so miraculously escaped Lisetta's imprudent foot the evening before. She looked at me, bowed, and spoke to me and the others with so much self-possession and vivacity that, although I had felt slightly embarrassed when our eyes first met, a few minutes later I had no thought for the tears and laments of the evening before. We were all rather put out when the captain told us with a smile that we should not cross the equator before ten o'clock; but we very soon forgot all about the line, as Cavalcanti, after the second course had been served, begged Alverighi to explain to him how it could be maintained that machinery had not made the world ugly.

"Why, it 's a case of Columbus's egg," answered Alverighi promptly and cheerfully. "Let us consider clothes, since that is the example you have cited. . . . Can you deny that the silk industry to-day turns out stuffs which are a joy to the eye, miracles of beauty, and real works of art? Do you suggest that all the other stuffs, woollen, linen, cotton, and so on, which women wear, are destitute of beauty? Or that that is not a

beautiful art which provides women with the robes which are the despair and ruin of us, their unfortunate husbands? I appoint Mrs. Feldmann arbitress on the spot, if any one is going to contest this point. But there is no fear that any one will; one would be on safer ground if one said that in men's clothes greater importance is always paid to comfort than to beauty. But even that is not true; even into the materials which we wear modern industry tries to introduce some spark of beauty to attract customers: attractive designs and colours; elegant cut; lines which suit the figure of the wearer; in short, beautiful effects, just as much as in the dress of the eighteenth century with all its ribbons, lace, and trimmings."

"But," interrupted Cavalcanti, shrugging his shoulders, "the materials of to-day are poor stuff, while those others were lasting monuments of art."

"Poor stuff? Monuments of art?" answered Alverighi. "Imposing words, I must confess. But please allow me to remind you of our talk the other evening. Have you quite forgotten it? I 'm afraid it was a mere waste of breath on my part. But that 's how it always is with discussions; we discuss, argue, lose our tempers with each other, one seems to conquer and convince, the other to be conquered and convinced, ideas seem to have been cleared up and transferred from one head to another. . . . And half an hour later every one returns to his old opinions, like a man who half wakes up at midnight and goes to sleep again a few minutes later. But now is the moment to turn our previous discussions to account in a practical case. Therefore I ask you: With what measure or scales are you going to measure and weigh the beauty of to-day's fashions and that of the fashions of old, and decide that there is

less in the former than in the latter? How are you going to prove to me that the fashions of old were the more beautiful, if I tell you—as I do tell you—that modern fashions please me more? All these are reversible opinions, to use your epithet, Signor Rosetti. As long as men and women dressed in stuffs, one yard of which took a month to make by hand, it was natural that the Church, the State, the Monarchy, the Aristocracy, all the potentates of the time, should struggle to impose on their people the few models available, and to oppose too frequent changes in taste and the invasion of alien models. They had no other way of assuring work and a living to the art corporations and convents; and how could they impose those models, except by persuading the people that they were beautiful, very beautiful, incomparably beautiful? But according as machinery triumphed, all the potentates of the world disinterested themselves from textile art. The public no longer have the eyes of all the authorities in heaven and earth upon them, when they choose their clothes. Nowadays one stuff attracts one person, another another. Judgments differ, but we do not quarrel and do not found chairs in æsthetics, to find out who is right and who is wrong. Every one buys and enjoys the stuff he likes. He puts it on, wears it out, throws it away, and forgets it."

"Granted, so far as stuffs, clothes, and furniture go," said Cavalcanti, after a moment's hesitation. "But what about the great arts, the aristocracy of the beautiful?"

Alverighi did not give him time to continue.

"In the great arts, too, what fools call the decadence of art is nothing but its liberation from worldly interests, effected by progress. For proof of this, consider

America for a minute. Europeans love to say that Americans are asses saddled with gold. It may be so. All the same you, Signor Cavalcanti, the other evening, when I attacked *Hamlet* so viciously—you said that Americans have a truer sense of the beautiful than Europeans. America, as you said, is open to every art, every school, and every idea equally and impartially. Is it not a fact that we shower bank-notes on the lecturers, musicians, authors and actors, singers, painters and sculptors of every country and school? Tell me the European city which produces so many operas of every school, and produces them so well as Buenos Aires and New York? Is n't it a fact that any one who wants to hear old Italian opera ought to go, not to Rome or Milan, but to Argentina or the United States? And which provided you, Ferrero, with the means of continuing your work, Europe or America? How could this phenomenon be explained, if America were the Thebaid of intelligence, the Sahara of culture? Thebaid, Sahara forsooth! America is disinterested from art; because, thanks to Heaven and thanks to progress, she has grain, iron, coal, petrol, and every other of God's blessings to sell in any quantity, and no arts to impose on other people either at home or abroad. Purify art of every interest, and what remains? That pleasure, uncertain and vague if you like, but delicious and intoxicating, which beauty confers, as you said the other day, Cavalcanti. Do not we Americans drink the finest champagnes, smoke the most expensive cigars, and get our clothes from the most fashionable London and Paris tailors? Why should we not enjoy, when we like, beautiful pictures, books, music, and gardens? But not, mind you, with the idea that our pleasure must needs be every one

else's or with the hope that it may be made so. . . . Of all the things that irritate me, the æsthetic conceit of Europeans irritates me most. They hold us Americans for barbarians, arrogating to themselves a monopoly in the production and judgment of beautiful things. That 's a fable the precious critics and æsthetes of Europe can tell to the marines! Æsthetics is the last surviving tyranny that Europe would like to impose upon the world; but believe me, gentlemen, America will scatter it, or rather, has already begun to scatter it to the four winds, and very successfully too. We intend to give every one the absolute right to admire what he thinks beautiful: Greek sculpture, Japanese painting, Gothic architecture, the sky-scrapers of New York, or the futurist music of Marinetti's friends, if he feels so disposed. No more critics, then, no more æsthetic theories, no more traditions, schools, prejudices, or *partis pris;* but liberty all the way! That is the only sure way of solving the interminable disputes about the beautiful which have distracted men for centuries. . . . Liberty!"

"I admit," replied Cavalcanti, "that there is some truth in what you say, so far as America is concerned at least. But in Europe——"

"In Europe also," interrupted Alverighi, "the masses have gone mad on progress; that is to say, on luxury, comforts, ease, and culture. How much bread and butter can the masses of the old world get out of those arts, letters, and sciences which are not helpful to industry, compared with lands, mines, and machines? Painting, for instance, or sculpture, or music; how many millions of operatives could these arts in Europe support, even supposing a nation succeeded in monopolising them, and in combining the nine Muses into a syndi-

cate? Believe me, these are dreams, chimeras, fantasies of other times. To-day the world wants machines, not pens, to feed its peoples. Art must be the lean resource of poor peoples, who have not vast territories and coal-mines."

And, taking no notice of the astonishment shown in our faces, he added with warmth:

"But, mark you, on one condition only. Artists must be content to be what they are, and nothing more: artisans of pleasure, select and well-paid, but artisans, not demigods! Liberty for the public, modesty for the artists: there you have the two principles of the art of the future. Could you, Mrs. Feldmann, tell me the name of the artist who designed that beautiful stuff you are wearing? I thought not. You never bothered to find out, I 'll be bound. You were content with admiring the stuff and paying for it. That is how every artist will be treated in the future; and they 'll be all the more serious and happy for it. The times are changed, gentlemen; woe to the nations who do not recognise it. For centuries men, instead of pouring over the universe like a flood, have concentrated themselves on a few spots in the world's expanse, and have refused to leave them; on a few forms of art, and have had no eyes, ears, or senses for any other; on one single doctrine of philosophy or on one single religious belief, and woe to him who dared to step outside its bounds! To-day all that 's a thing of the past. Man has flung wide the gates of the universe, progress has conquered, America is queen! We desire the whole of the earth, the whole of beauty, all the pleasures, all the truths."

But he could not continue.

Already the stewards had begun to pour out the champagne offered by the ship to celebrate the passage

of the equator; so our discussion was interrupted at this point by the toasts and the ceremony of baptism. The captain spilt a few drops of champagne on the head of each passenger who was crossing for the first time the imaginary frontier of the two hemispheres. But the rite was no sooner finished than the stewards reappeared with several more bottles, and began to distribute generous bumpers—full of the precious wine. It was a present from Signor Vazquez. In the saloon, heated by the tropical sun and by the fumes of the wine we had already drunk, hilarity became general. We all rose and drank to the health of Signor Vazquez and Argentina. Signor Vazquez, composed, calm, and dignified, but smiling with satisfaction, courteously acknowledged each salute.

The talk and the chatter went on for a while, but we could not again pick up the threads of our discussion; so the dinner ended cheerfully, but in frivolous conversation—and in the southern hemisphere all the time! One after the other we got tired of sitting at the table waiting for the equator, which, as Alverighi put it, was "taking things rather too easily"; and we dispersed through the ship. I went out with Gina and Cavalcanti behind Mrs. Feldmann, who was leaning on the Admiral's arm. In the vestibule, while Cavalcanti, alluding to Alverighi, murmured in my ear: "You are right, Ferrero; he 's a genius who has reverted to savagery in the Pampas," I could see the fair Genoese, the São Paulo doctor's wife, two or three other women, and the jeweller standing there as if expecting some one; the millionairess, obviously. In fact they stopped talking and bowed to her when she appeared from the dining-saloon in the vestibule; then, as she walked towards the door on to the deck, cast almost greedy

glances after her, as if they wished to stamp on their memories all the marvels, living and dead, natural and artificial, before their eyes. Curious to hear what they would say when she had gone out, I dawdled in the vestibule.

"How beautiful," sighed the Genoese, alluding either to Mrs. Feldmann or to her dress, perhaps to both; for Mrs. Feldmann's riches had raised her, like a queen, above the range of natural feminine jealousy. Another passenger began a eulogy of her whole get-up, going into minute details as if to show what an expert she was in the minutiæ of gorgeous and expensive dress. But the jeweller interrupted her:

"Never mind the dress! It 's the pearls. . . . What marvellous pearls! I 'll be bound they used to belong to some Indian rajah. It used to be only Indian princes who had pearls like that!"

CHAPTER III

HALF-an-hour later the fair Genoese came up on the deck, and begged me to ask Mrs. Feldmann to play some dance-music.

"With pleasure," I replied. "But where is she?"

"Up in the drawing-room, playing. Don't you hear her?"

I caught little snatches of music coming from the drawing-room, so I left the doctor and went up with the Genoese. I communicated to the august lady the humble request of her admirers. Several couples were soon dancing to the music of a waltz, while I joined the Admiral in a corner.

"How fresh, calm, and cheerful she is!" I whispered to him, referring to Mrs. Feldmann; "who would suppose that yesterday evening——"

"These society women!" answered the Admiral, without taking his eyes off the dancers. "A smart dress has the same effect on them as a bugle-call on us men of war. When they have got one on, they forget everything else. Discomforts, illnesses, age——"

I recounted to him shortly the conversation my wife had had with Mrs. Feldmann that morning, but, when I told him that the latter had some doubts whether her husband were not slightly mad, he laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" I asked.

"No reason at all!" he answered; "only it 's funny."

And he again stopped, while I began once more on the topic discussed at dinner. Suddenly a long harsh blast from the whistle informed us that we had crossed the imaginary frontier between the two hemispheres. The couples separated, the pianist rose, and we all ran hurriedly on deck. From the depths below, and from every corner of the ship, the third class poured on to the two first-class decks to watch the *Cordova* steam into the northern hemisphere. Cheers and shouts resounded through the night. . . . The night was, as usual, dark; overhead the stars shone in their customary silent splendour. The *Cordova* steamed along at her usual deliberate pace, throwing up a cascade of water on each side of the bows. We had changed our hemisphere, but we had not changed our world.

Gradually, after gazing above, below, to right, and to left, and after assuring ourselves that, though we had changed our hemisphere, we had changed nothing else, we all dispersed through the ship. Some time later my wife and I were talking in a corner of the promenade deck, when Mrs. Feldmann came up. She sat down by us, and began to talk on the usual topics—the weather, the sea, and the events of the evening, by way of breaking the ice; then suddenly asked me whether no announcement or rumour about her husband, which might enlighten her, had reached my ears at New York. I answered, with perfect truth, in the negative; then asked her laughingly whether her husband really was like Nero.

"If we disregard his cruelty," I said, "Nero was a weak, hesitating, timorous man. A banker may be anything you like, a vulture or a pickpocket; but energy he must have."

Mrs. Feldmann was busy, at the moment, smoothing out a corner of her white scarf on her lap.

"Do you really think so?" she said slowly, raising her eyes, and looking at me with a smile.

"Great heavens, I should think I did!" I answered with an air of assurance; "Bankers are the 'condottieri' of the modern world."

"Possibly, for you men of learning, who survey the world from a lofty standpoint. . . . But for the wives who have to live with them night and day. . . . I'm not so certain."

"But you surely don't deny that men like Morgan, Rockefeller, and Underhill are men of grit?"

"Underhill!" she said emphatically. "Yes, he was a great man."

"Did you know him?" asked Gina. "We were to have lunched with him in New York, three months before he died. Something happened to prevent us."

"Underhill," answered Mrs. Feldmann, "was a friend of the family."

"One of the banks," I said, turning to my wife, "which helped Underhill to reorganise the 'Great Continental' was the Loewenthal bank. Mr. Feldmann is one of its directors."

"What sort of man was he?" asked Gina. "Mr. Otto Kahn told us that he was such an interesting man."

"An extraordinary man!" answered the other. "But please understand me: *Il n'était pas homme du monde pour un centime.* He would n't have seen any difference between this dress of mine and the one the São Paulo doctor's wife was wearing. But, as I often told my husband, he was a real man."

"He was a real man, was he?" I thought to myself, "what was her husband, then?"

I asked her when she had made Underhill's acquaintance.

"Fifteen years ago," she answered. "One day my husband came and asked me to invite Mr. Richard Underhill to dinner. I had never heard the name, and asked him who he was. 'A half-starved stockbroker,' he replied. 'My uncle is set upon my inviting him.' Stockbroker he was, but not half-starved, as I found out later. He already had some capital, small compared with my husband's, and tiny compared with what he left to his children; but he had collected it by his own efforts, as his people were not at all well off. But my husband always looked down on men poorer than himself, when they were not disposed to kowtow to him; it was one of the defects I most disliked in him."

"He seems to have plenty," I said laughingly; "and you are not what I should call an over-indulgent wife."

"You mean, I am not an insincere one," she answered with an air of candour.

"Sincere and severe, it seems to me."

"Just what my mother always told me," she replied. "But I 'm made like that."

"I 'm not surprised. One often finds that sort of severe sincerity in saints, sovereigns, princes, great men, and too-beautiful and too-much-flattered women."

"And under which head do you class me amongst the number of these severely-sincere?" she asked with an arch smile.

"Proceed by exclusion. Are you a saint? a queen? a princess? No. Well then——"

"But I hope that you will allow that this sincerity is a virtue."

"That depends."

"Depends on what?"

"People like that are usually keen upholders of justice and right. That is all to the good. The bad

is, that sometimes you find mixed with this love of justice a sprinkling of pride and arrogance. For don't you think a little pride and arrogance necessary if a man is to think himself capable of judging his fellows on every occasion and without appeal?"

"Thanks for the compliment!" she answered. "You mean then that I am a vain, silly, arrogant woman."

"Vain and silly, no. A trifle proud and arrogant? I don't know . . . I reserve judgment . . . We 'll see. Let 's go back to Underhill. I suppose he had the honour of being invited to dinner by you, after he had been elected president of the 'Great Continental'?"

"Precisely. You know that, before that, not one of the magnates of American finance would have consented to treat Underhill as an equal."

"He had never managed any but small railroads," I said, "though he had managed those well enough."

"To be sure. No one at first wanted to have him at the head of the 'Great Continental.' My husband was naturally one of his keenest opponents. But Underhill talked such a lot, and did such a lot, that he carried the day. Then each of the principal men interested in the railway gave a dinner to celebrate the peace. I, however, had never busied myself much about my husband's affairs, nor had paid much attention to what he said. . . . Two days before the dinner, whom should I meet but Otto Kahn. You know him, I believe. I happened to mention to him that among my guests there would be a man called Underhill. 'A man called Underhill!' he answered with a laugh. 'Why, in a few years' time that man will be the Napoleon of American finance!' Do you know what my husband said, when I repeated this to him? 'Kahn is mad!'

But that 's nothing; the funniest part 's to come. . . When I think of it——"

And she burst into a merry laugh.

"You who see a hero in every banker, just listen. One morning, soon after the dinner, my husband came home looking daggers. He was beside himself. I had scarcely time to ask him if he felt ill, before he shouted: 'I told you he was mad, stark, staring mad!' And he thumped on the table, jumped from chair to chair, upset the books; it was he that was mad, not Underhill. For it was Underhill to whom he was alluding. And do you know what had happened? Just fancy; Underhill had gone off quietly on a tour on the 'Great Continental,' to see what could be done to put the railway, which had been bankrupt for some years, on its legs again. For two weeks there was silence, no news of him transpired. At last came a telegram in these terms: 'Require thirty million dollars.' And it was those thirty million dollars that my husband was raving about."

"Underhill did n't beat about the bush!" I could not help remarking.

"And he was quite right, too," she replied quickly and decidedly. "If bankers can't risk their money, what are they for?"

"But you don't suggest that they ought to have wired him the hundred and fifty million francs by return?"

"I don't say that," she answered with a laugh. "But one looks for a little energy, boldness, and confidence. Far from it! I don't know a more chicken-hearted lot. And the most chicken-hearted of them all was my husband. You ought to have seen him that time . . . Underhill had to come to New York, and to

talk, persuade, and explain. . . . My husband was frightened out of his wits. For fifteen days he hardly slept or ate for agitation. All the others, it must be confessed, were full of anxiety, even the uncle, who really was a sound sort of man. They were all panic-stricken for fear that the railway would fail again within two or three years. And three years later they distributed some hundreds of millions."

"And Underhill had become a great man," I added.

"He deserved it, for the credit was his and his alone."

"But we must not forget that fortune, too, had her finger in the pie. Just at that time the prices of cereals went up. Prosperity returned to those parts which had been ruined by the crisis of '93. The Philippine war, too, helped. If he had made a mistake——"

"But he had not made a mistake; his genius had perceived that the times were changing."

"Had perceived? or had gone straight ahead with its eyes shut, on a voyage into the unknown?"

"You would n't ask, if you had heard him discussing things with my husband. It 's a curious thing," she added after a moment's reflection, "my husband is a regular mine of knowledge. You need only listen to him proving that the 'Continental' districts were bound to remain desert for centuries. When he talked, even to me, who am a poor, ignorant woman, it seemed that he must be right. While all the time . . . How do you explain it?"

Instead of explaining it, I asked a question about her husband's studies. Since she seemed to be in a confidential mood, I thought I might risk a first question about her domestic affairs. She answered, with ready and ingenuous frankness:

"He studied at Bonn in Germany for some time; then at the 'École des Sciences politiques et morales' in Paris . . . I understand he did extremely well; and I can quite believe it, because I fancy he is at bottom more of a professor than a banker. His father always told him so. Even now he is never happy except amongst his books or writing an article for some Review of political economy."

"Even now?"

"If you only knew," she answered, raising her hands with a gesture of dismay, "what a lot he reads and writes! He can't get to sleep without a book or a Review to help him. When I think of my first years of married life, and the tears those wretched books cost me! Why, he actually carried a box of books about with him on his travels. In liners, at Paris, in hotels, at spas, he had scarcely settled down, even for a day or two, before he had his books out and was hard at it, reading and scribbling away. . . . How many theatres, museums, and amusements, have I not given up, because it was too great a sacrifice for him to tear himself away from his desk. *Ce n'était pas folichon, je vous assure* . . . But I got accustomed to it bit by bit."

She sighed. Now was the time, I thought, to venture on a rather indiscreet question point-blank; so I said:

"He was n't a very tender husband, then?"

But at this question I felt her bridle up, and, as it were, slip away from my grasp.

"On the contrary," she said with a slight blush, "Frederick is a model husband."

Then she suddenly harked back to our previous topic.

"Underhill, on the other hand, was a simple man; without much education, a big baby, I might almost

call him. Yet he had the intuition which my husband had not, for all his studies and all his books. I never could understand why . . . And yet my husband is an intelligent man."

"Intuition is a gift of God; erudition is an accomplishment of man."

She was silent for a moment; then, all at once, said:

"Guess what I said one morning to my husband."

And she began to laugh.

"Underhill was older than my husband, I don't know how many years. . . . Well, I told him that Underhill seemed to me a young man of twenty, while he seemed a venerable old man of ninety."

"That was complimentary, and no mistake!" I said with some surprise.

"Yes, he sulked for three whole days. And yet this time, too, I was quite right."

"As you always were."

"Don't mock me. I was right, because my husband was alway so pessimistic and diffident; while Underhill was so optimistic, confident, and cheerful."

"American, in fact, while your husband is European. But you are now admiring in the person of Underhill that America which the other day you described as barbarous. The courage, the impetuosity, the energy you speak of are just the qualities——"

"Of the Americans?" she interrupted quickly, shrugging her shoulders contemptuously. "Do you, like all Europeans, think so? Why do the Americans make such a lot of money? As if it were difficult to make money!"

"It is, just a little, I should say. Or rather, it is only too much so," I answered caustically.

"But even my husband has made such a lot in America!" she retorted.

Her merciless insistence irritated me, and I protested in defence of the husband I have never met:

"At least the millions did n't drop from the skies into your husband's mouth!"

"Certainly not," she answered at once, and somewhat impatiently. "He knows how to choose his men; that 's where his secret lies; the men who are endowed with the qualities he himself lacks. He hates them, but he knows how to use them; and above all he knows how to hide his own weaknesses behind their backs. In that way he is intelligent—as, indeed, he is in every way. That 's how he has succeeded in making many people believe that he is a kind of Napoleon of finance, and, what is more curious, has ended by believing it himself. . . . Just as Nero thought he was a great artist. You see, then, he much resembles Nero. You should see how quickly he forgets, when an enterprise has succeeded, that he has advised against it. One day, after Underhill's triumph, I reminded him of his despair over the famous telegram of the thirty millions. You should have seen his fury!"

Not exactly uninterrupted harmony! I thought to myself. But my eyes betrayed my surprise at her last remarks so clearly that she suddenly stopped, and said:

"Dear me! Have I said what I ought not?"

"No, I don't say that," I replied with some embarrassment. Then added: "But why did you remind him of it?"

"Why? why do you suppose? Because it was right to do so . . . Do you think it right for a man to take to himself the credit which is due to another?"

"I do not say that it is right; but——"

And I stopped, and looked at her.

"There 's no 'but' about it," she replied, with a little toss of the head. "You surely don't think I 'm an accommodating person? A woman for arrangements, hypocrisies, and lies? Not I. And perhaps I was right in not wishing to marry him, and wrong in giving way to my parents . . . But I was so young!"

"Ah!" I said, this time without any hidden meaning. "So you did not want to marry him?"

Again Mrs. Feldmann blushed slightly; but instead of answering she got up, and gathering her scarf round her shoulders, said:

"Please excuse me, but I must go, I am beginning to feel the damp of the night-air."

We also rose, while I said to myself:

I understand clearly enough now, why your husband wants a divorce. That 's not a difficult problem!

While we were taking leave of each other, I got a closer look at her necklace than I had succeeded in getting before. Just for something to say at parting, I remarked:

"I ought to tell you that those pearls, no less than their wearer, are the object of general admiration in the ship. A jeweller who is on board says that they must have belonged to some Indian prince."

I shall not forget, as long as I live, the disconcerting peal of laughter with which my well-turned compliment was met.

"Can't you guess why I laugh? These pearls are sham! I have a real necklace like this, but it is at the 'Credit Lyonnais' in Paris. Six months ago I travelled back to Brazil alone, and I did not want to take my jewels with me."

"Now I understand!" I exclaimed, recollecting at

that moment Lisetta and her imprudent foot. But I checked myself in time.

"What do you understand?" she asked with curiosity.

"I understand . . . I understand that this necklace is a marvellous imitation."

"What a thing an idea is!" she replied. "One need never wear anything but false pearls. If the world credits you with enough money to buy real ones, it will believe them to be real even when they are false; if it does not, it will believe them to be false even when they are real."

And she left us.

"I should say," I said, turning to Gina," that that woman detests her husband."

But at that moment Cavalcanti came up.

"Come here, Ferrero!" he said; "Rosetti and Alverighi are busy over the discussion on progress which we began this evening. The lawyer seems to be getting some hard nuts to crack this time!"

We crossed over the deck. In the middle of the promenade deck, not far from the companion to the upper deck, under the melodious shower of notes and harmonies which came down from the drawing-room, where they had begun again to dance, Rosetti, the Admiral, and Alverighi were sitting in a circle.

"No, no, no!" were the first words I heard as I drew near. It was Alverighi, who was talking rather excitedly. My wife took the seat which Cavalcanti had vacated when he came to fetch us, and he and I brought two more seats up. "You cannot compare nations and civilisations, any more than you can measure progress either by moral standards—that 's where Signora Ferrero goes wrong—or by æsthetic standards, which

is where Signor Cavalcanti goes wrong. I will go further, as the mention of France has brought us to the topic of refined civilisation. I think that the idea of a refined civilisation ought to be torn out of men's brains by the roots with fire and sword. A refined civilisation, if it is not a vice, is a lie, an illusion, and an imposture."

At this moment, from the door opening on to the dining-room vestibule, there rushed out a crowd of shouting and laughing passengers, including the two wine-merchants, the fair Genoese, and the São Paulo doctor's wife, the men dragging the women along, while the latter struggled and laughed. The festival of the equator was being celebrated with a will. We stopped to let them pass.

"They seem to be enjoying themselves!" murmured the Admiral.

Rosetti said:

"In short, art, according to you, is a diversion pure and simple, detached from that great movement in human things which is called progress."

"Naturally," answered Alverighi. It 's quite obvious. To progress means to learn to make better or to make in greater quantity. Now who does not know that in art many think that we are inferior to our forefathers, and have unlearned rather than learned? Others, it is true, think the opposite; but no one can say which side is right and which wrong. The only safe conclusion is that art does not progress; it only changes and varies."

"The same," added Rosetti, "might be said about morality, then, I 'm afraid. How are we to know whether one generation is better or worse than another? Then, according to you, is there no difference worthy

of being called improvement and progress between the drop-curtain of a wild-beast show and the *Transfiguration*,[1] for instance; or between Gasparone and Saint Francis, Nero and a Stoic philosopher, the clothes of the stewardess and those of Mrs. Feldmann, the wine the emigrants drink and the champagne we drank this evening, the meat of the stocks which Argentina has selected so carefully in recent years, and the herds which she once upon a time used to trust to the mercies of heaven on the Pampas? And yet the other evening you maintained the opposite with regard to Argentine meat."

This objection surprised Alverighi, who answered with some embarrassment:

"I don't say that at all. Don't exaggerate. Every assertion must be taken with a certain discretion, not literally like that . . . with a certain amount of latitude. If not, where are you going to draw the line? Yes, even in arts and in morals a certain amount of progress is possible; but—how shall I put it?—it is slower and less continuous. The differences are not distinguishable except at great intervals of time. . . . I 'm not sure if I make myself clear."

"You mean to say, if I understand rightly, that no one has yet discovered a measure so infinitesimally small as to be able to measure the smallest gradations of the beautiful and the good; that consequently it is possible to distinguish only obvious differences; that at a certain stage of perfection all possibility of comparison vanishes, the grades of quality are no longer distinct, and everything can be equally well judged beautiful or

[1] The *Transfiguration* was left unfinished by Raphael, and completed after his death, probably by Giulio Romano. It is now in the Vatican gallery.

good. That the *Transfiguration* is more beautiful than the wild-beast show, or champagne better than common wine, nobody will deny; but on the other hand it is not possible to decide whether the *Transfiguration* or the *Love Sacred and Profane* is the more beautiful, whether champagne or Bordeaux is the better wine."

"Excellent, excellent!" interrupted Alverighi eagerly. "That 's just what I meant. Perhaps that will explain too why men spent so many centuries perfecting arts, religions, and laws in their ancient dens before sallying forth to conquer the world. First and foremost they had to acquire some slight amount of polish. But what about to-day? I ask myself every morning and every evening if we are asleep or dreaming or in our dotage. Cannot any one perceive that the recent history of the world dates from the day on which in America, man learned to exploit vast territories, to cultivate limitless plains, and to travel over the bounds of the horizon? I have said it once, but I see that I had better repeat it; up to a century ago, before the invention of steam engines, railways, and all the other steam- and electric-driven machines, so long as man had to work with his hands and move with his legs or with those of a few animals little faster than himself, humanity was not to be found in the great plains, but was huddled together perforce on the narrow bounds and ribbon-like edges of the earth. There, Signora Ferrero, you have the reason why ancient civilisations flourished on small and sterile territories, while the more fertile parts of the earth, precisely those on which the human race could have spread and multiplied the riches of the world indefinitely, were practically deserted. Now the miracle has come about; and it 's no use for you, Signor Rosetti, to repeat to me that

France continues to give birth to all the elegant refinements of a most exquisite civilisation. . . . But the world has no use for these refinements; in America man has learned to measure himself by continents; man must now conquer Asia, Africa, and Australia. . . . France would be better occupied in diverting the Niger and pouring it over the Sahara than in preserving the traditions of good cooking or of classical sculpture. I repeat what I said to-day, the real progress is the conquest of the earth."

Rosetti listened seriously and attentively. After a minute's pause he asked in a quiet, low voice:

"The conquest of the earth by means of machines?"

"Exactly."

"But machines multiply riches at express speed, as Signora Ferrero says. Then the most patent sign of progress will be the increase of riches. Progress is therefore the production of more. Shall we define progress also as the consumption of more?"

Alverighi must have scented some trap in this question, for, instead of returning a straight answer, he said:

"I don't understand. . . I did n't quite grasp your meaning."

"That the power of producing more is progress, is quite clear to me. But is the consumption of more, progress too? Here 's Signora Ferrero who says it is not; and what she says now used to be said also by the ancients. For the ancients,—you, Ferrero, will bear me out in this,—every increase of luxury and of needs savoured of corruption; parsimony, simplicity, and austerity were universal and eternal virtues. All Signora Ferrero's arguments against machines seem to me to spring from this principle of olden days; the increase of needs is an ill. The principle is open to criticism; but

are you ready to maintain the opposite, that an increase in consumption is always a sign of progress? That, for instance, the man who drinks a bottle of wine at lunch and another at dinner is a more perfect man than he who drinks only half a glass? Or that the man of leisure who squanders half a million francs a year is more estimable than the hard-working artisan, who cannot spend in a year more than the few thousand francs he gains by the sweat of his brow! Or that we are superior to the Romans, just because we smoke tobacco, drink tea, coffee, cognac, Benedictine, Chartreuse, Strega, and a dozen other liquors unknown to Ferrero's friends, the ancient Romans?"

"No, I don't think so," answered Alverighi.

"It is clear then," answered Rosetti, "that the growth of certain needs only is progress. Shall we call these the legitimate needs? Progress is then to increase riches, and to conquer the earth, according as riches and conquest serve to satisfy legitimate needs. If we wished to conquer the earth in order to abandon ourselves to a wild orgy on it, the conquest would not be progress, would it? Tell me then, by what criterion shall we distinguish legitimate needs from illegitimate, progressive from unprogressive?"

Alverighi was again embarrassed, and waited a moment before answering:

"It 's not easy to answer your question straight off . . . *stans pede in uno.* It might be easier to answer for particular cases than by a general formula."

"But how are you going to judge each particular case, if you have n't got a clear principle in your mind?" asked Rosetti.

Alverighi paused for a minute perplexed; then asked rather brusquely:

"What are you driving at?"

"The conclusion I wish to arrive at," he answered, "is, that Signora Ferrero was right, when she affirmed that machinery would not have been invented if our needs had not grown to such an extent that manual labour could no longer satisfy them. But you identify machinery with progress. I then go a step further, and say that the invention of machines is not progress except according as those machines serve to satisfy 'legitimate' needs, as I think we agreed to call them. We must be able, then, to distinguish legitimate needs from vices. But how can we? Beautiful is what pleases me, or what it is my interest to consider as such—as we said the other day, I have some apprehension that the idea of progress also may be, in the same way a 'reversible' idea and that a man thinks every need legitimate, noble, and deserving of satisfaction, which is strong in himself or which it is his interest to propagate. For a philosopher the world progresses with a growth in the number of heads interested in metaphysical problems; for a shoemaker, with a diminution in the number of feet which go unshod. You said that we are not superior to the Romans just because we smoke and drink tea; but I don't know if a tobacco- or tea-merchant would be of the same opinion. You have proved that our epoch is the most progressive in history; your reasoning might be reversed and used to prove that we are decadent. You said a short while ago that France is old and the United States young. Suppose I turned your thesis upside down, and proved that, if France is old, it is better for a nation to be old than young?"

"It would entertain me mightily to hear you do so," said Alverighi, clearly incredulous, in a tone of sarcastic impatience.

"Would it bore you all?" answered Rosetti.

We all protested that it would not. After a moment's hesitation, Rosetti began:

"It 's agreed, then, that the United States is young; its growth is quite obvious. In fifty years it has mastered a continent as large as Europe, and has not yet finished. It is spreading into Mexico and Canada, on the other side of the Pacific it has appropriated the Philippines at a stroke, it is watching Japan carefully, and is casting eyes on China. France, on the contrary, lives on in her little territory like an old-clothes man in his little shop, making what? Busts, hats, scents, combs, jewels, and other feminine frivolities of the same sort, not to mention other industries which . . . You know what I mean. She cultivates the arts, it is true, and I grant you that she does so in admirable fashion. But after all the world has the right to demand of a nation of forty million souls something more than statues, pictures, and elegant furniture, especially when that nation possesses so vast an empire. But what does France do with her colonies? She lets her loving eyes dwell on them, but, like a timid lover, does not dare to touch them. She makes a thousand projects, drops them, takes them up again, and finally makes up her mind to carry out one of them; and, ye gods! how circumspectly she does it. Perhaps, in a thousand years from now, her empire will be an empire. If it was the Americans, now! France is becoming depopulated while the United States has absorbed as many as a million men in one year from Europe and Asia, and has found work for the lot. I will pass over, if you wish, the want of discipline in France which is permeating all the ranks of society, the vice of drunken-

ness, and the increase of crime; but what about religious and philosophical conflicts? In America, religions, sects, and doctrines live in peace side by side. Chicago, the city of grain and pigs, has gone so far as to summon the religions of the world to a congress in the heart of the immense and fertile plains of the West. In the new Byzantium, on the other hand, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, freemasons, freethinkers, socialists, and anarchists wrangle furiously from morning till night about God, justice, the state, morality, and the principles of education; a sign that France no longer has either religion or justice or state or morality or education. She lacks them because she is growing old, because instead of boldly sallying forth into the world to join in mankind's new great crusade, the conquest of the earth, she withdraws into a corner to listen to a vast discordant crowd of jealous, proud, and fanatical intellectuals, who pass their time in rabid disputes about these insoluble problems. Not so America; America conquers the world; she works and tolerates, instead of disputing and persecuting!"

"All that strikes me as true," said Alverighi.

Rosetti lit his cigar, which had gone out while he was speaking, and answered:

"Very true? Wait one moment, and I will reverse the whole argument. I will not deny that the United States has done great things; but with what means, if I may ask? Those eighty—or ninety, is it?—million men must have elbow-room. Not even nine million square kilometers, a territory larger than Europe, suffice; they are nibbling at Mexico and Canada, they have taken the Philippines, and are eyeing South America. Bless their hearts, what appetites! 'Gently, if you please, gentlemen,' one feels inclined to say;

'you 're not the only people in the world, allow me to tell you; look at France, what a lot she manages to do with a territory of little more than 500,000 square kilometers, about as big as one of your states.' And all the time she supports 40,000,000 men; without American lavishness, it is true, but when was extravagance a subject of praise? And she not only supports them; she maintains in life and vigour the most complete among the world's cultures, because it lacks not one of the ingredients which go to make up a civilisation; neither literature, nor art, nor science, nor philosophy, nor law, nor refinements of dress and of customs, nor arms, nor agriculture, nor industry, nor commerce, nor money and banks. You may say that she sets to work to civilise new territories too slowly. But that does not call for surprise or reproof; for she not only exploits lands, mines, and markets, but tries really to civilise, that is to say, to change ideas and sentiments. But why do I confine myself to the earth? In the sky, too, France opens new roads to man. Who has taught us to conquer the firmament and that not with the flight of aeroplanes alone, but also with will and with thought? The answer is obvious. Judge as you will the separation between Churches and State; but no one will deny that all the novelties and the bold enterprises of the past pale beside this step, whether good or bad the future alone can tell. For with that law, for the first time in the history of the world, a nation has withdrawn herself from the protection of God, and has dared to crown herself sovereign of herself! No, France knows nothing of American tolerance, and that is all to her credit; on the contrary, the tolerance of America is to her blame, seeing that in America no one minds other people's beliefs and every one lives in

peace, because every one puts material goods before ideal goods. American tolerance is the child of materialism. But, you will say, look at the lack of discipline, the alcoholism, the number of crimes and divorces in France. But, I answer, life is a rushing cascade, not an elegant garden fountain; the disorder, as you call it, is nothing but the very impetus with which it advances from the past to the future. After all, would we rather find in the great expanse of North America eight or ten Frances, each one with a Paris of its own, or would we prefer to see Europe monopolised by another America with a population of eighty or ninety million men? It is true that the Americans have conquered in half a century a continent as large as Europe; but they have done so leaving immense deserts behind them. How much surer, though slower, than this hasty and summary conquest has been the conquest of Europe, made step by step, without leaving behind one hand's breadth of land empty or uncultivated. No; the American outlines, and can do no more than outline. To put the finishing touch to a civilisation, nations of a different mould are required. Naturally the population does not grow much and cannot grow much in France, just as it does not grow and cannot grow in any highly-civilised country, just as it does not grow, for instance, in New England. It is not enough to count the heads; one must weigh them too."

At this point the two wine-merchants and their friends came dashing down the companion on to the promenade deck, in greater numbers and with even more noise and laughter than before. Again we had to pause.

It was not till they had all cleared off again that Rosetti, smiling, continued:

"One could go on in this strain as long as one liked. But, to sum up, I very much doubt if progress admits of definition; for all progress if you regard it from the reverse side, becomes regress. Whoever will not allow that the sandal is badly made, can always say, like Leo, that his foot is to blame. Leo has given us, without knowing it, a small philosophic sample of progress."

Alverighi did not answer; and for the first time the Admiral, who had listened hitherto attentively but in silence, intervened:

"It seems to me, all the same, that there is a sure criterion by which to measure progress."

"What is it?" asked Rosetti.

But the task of working out so wide a subject to its close was too difficult in the midst of the noisy festivities of the equator. At that moment up came Vazquez, and told us that it was half past eleven. He said he wished to finish the day of the "crossing" by drinking a glass with the savants of the *Cordova*. He asked us, therefore, to suspend our learned discussion, which had already lasted a good time, and to follow him into the dining-room. After some hesitation and polite remarks we agreed. At the richly decked middle table Vazquez made Gina sit on his right hand, and indicated that the seat on his left was reserved for Mrs. Feldmann, if the Admiral would be so kind as to look for her and ask her to come. The Admiral consented, though he doubted whether she had not already gone to bed. The rest of us arranged ourselves as we pleased. Amongst the floral decorations of the table rose some bottles of champagne surrounded by several cold dishes, amongst them various meats and fruits from Argentina which our discreet host, for love of his distant country,

had disposed artistically amongst the other eatables; those tinned ox-tonques which are among the most dainty delicacies of Argentina; several pots of that delicious quince marmalade which the Argentines call "membrillo"; some magnificant peaches in syrup, which came from Mendoza. We chatted while waiting for Mrs. Feldmann, who came in in a minute, escorted by the Admiral. Instead of turning in, as she had intended, the heat and noise had driven her into a corner of the upper deck, where she had been reading, and as soon as she was seated, there was a popping of corks and the supper began. From tasting the Argentine dainties we passed on to discussing them; we all praised them, not out of politeness, but sincerely. Proud and happy, Vazquez thanked us, as Americans often do when they are pleased with the praise accorded to their country.

"The finest peaches in the world, are n't they?" he said in Spanish. "Would you like to know what profit my friend who grows them makes? It is quite easy to calculate. Every six-year-old tree produces on an average six hundred peaches: ten peaches per tin make sixty tins per tree. My friend sells each tin for half a dollar. That gives a gross return of thirty dollars per tree. Planting three hundred peach trees per hectare —and that gives them plenty of room—we get a return of nine thousand dollars; a little less than twenty thousand francs. The expenditure necessary to cultivate and prepare them amounts to about half of this; the profit then for every hectare is ten thousand francs. Ten thousand francs! there is no more lucrative crop in the world; not lucerne, nor grain, nor linen."

This started Alverighi, who cried:

"Except olives," and he told us how in the province

of Mendoza one hectare of olive trees might return as much as thirteen thousand francs.

Vazquez corroborated him. Questions and observations poured in, all inviting Alverighi to lay still more vivid colours on to the picture of the prodigious wealth of Argentina which his friend had begun to draw soberly enough. So, gradually, in the midst of a babel of French, Italian, and Spanish, we saw the Italian philosopher turned agriculturist, and the Argentine agriculturist in his capacity as such, lay at our feet, as it were in a vision, the treasures of the vast republic. Both of them, the one with a prolix parade of similes, the other with the succinct and dignified emphasis proper to the Spanish tongue described to us the new Promised Land. They carried us over the boundless Pampas stretching out to the flat limit of the horizon, through the felds of lucerne, in which twice every year the sickle cuts the plant with leaves of gold as far as eye can reach. They transported us to the burning summers and the radiant harvests, when the transatlantic Ceres empties her lap full of ears of corn on the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fé, and Cordova, and when from village to village, while the thrashing machines hum, the harvesters sing, and the waggons laden with grain roll slowly towards the sea, there runs, as it were, a pæan of victory. They showed us from afar the flowering vineyards of Mendoza, the green sugar-cane fields of Tucuman, the ancient bushes of "quebracho," hard as the steel that cuts them. They introduced us to the melancholy green solitude of the vast farms, where over the tall and thick clumps of eucalyptus, over the arms of the solitary windmills revolving in the distance, over the low roofs of the scattered byres, and over the shimmering blue of the

lakes, passes slow and black against the azure expanse of sky, the silent flight of great flocks of birds. Before us, too, as if they were leading them and calling them by name they caused to pass each pride of Argentina: a certain shorthorn belonging to Signor Alfredo Martinez de Hoz, a certain Holmer II. of Hereford stock, the property of Signor Perreyra Iraola, which at some show, or other, beat all his English rivals; the sires of the new strains famous for excellence and the prices they fetch, which Argentina breeds for the rest of the world; that famous bull for which an Argentine paid one hundred and ten thousand francs, forty thousand francs more than had ever been paid, in any part of the world since the world began, for any horned beast; the famous horse, "Diamond Jubilee," bought from King Edward VII. by Ignazio Correas for one million francs; the flock of one thousand two hundred Lincoln sheep of the purest breed from which Signor Coro wished to pick the finest specimens in Mr. Wright's fold; but they were all so fine that he bought them all, writing a cheque for fifty thousand pounds sterling on the spot. Bit by bit we were all swept away in this whirlwind of millions. The conversation soon passed to the appreciation—or, as they say in America to the "valorisation"—of the land, to the fortunes made, as it were in their sleep, by the wise men who were clever enough to get in first in the race for land, not in Argentina only, but in Brazil and in North America also. Every one had some instance to adduce. I alone kept silence and pondered. . . . Was it the effect of the discussions to which I had listened throughout that long day? I do not know; but, as at the end of that long day at the Equator I thought over the discussions in which we had spent that and the preceding days the whole world seemed to me to sink

back into the twilight of a dream. . . . What was that Equator for which we had longed the livelong day? An imaginary line. To trace in one's mind an imaginary line, to yearn for it, to struggle to reach it, to rejoice at having crossed it, when the universe has changed not a whit. . . . What else are glory, power, happiness, and wisdom? What is life but an eternal crossing of the Equator, a continual struggle to reach some imaginary line? Beauty is imaginary, truth imaginary, progress imaginary, everything is imaginary. . . . At that moment Mrs. Feldmann chanced to catch my eye just as her fingers were playing with the pearls on her bare neck; and she smiled. Her gesture was as natural as her smile; but for some unknown reason both gesture and smile seemed at that moment to me, who alone was privy to the secret, to allude discreetly to the falseness of the pearls. Even beauty then was an illusion. . . . Must love, too, be an illusion? A mingled feeling of oppression and happiness, sadness and joy, filled my mind; I listened abstractedly to the conversation and continued to sip my wine, while the world gradually wrapped itself in a cloud of mystery.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN I left my cabin next morning about ten o'clock—no one was up early that Thursday—I met the Admiral on the promenade deck. I gave him a short account of our conversation with Mrs. Feldmann, and I put into words, rather guardedly at first, the thoughts which had been troubling me ever since. I hinted that the ready and heartless way in which she spoke of her husband with the first-comer was not to my liking, and made me rather sceptical as to the genuineness of the outburst which I had witnessed on Tuesday evening. The Admiral smiled and said:

"Do you know why I laughed last night when I heard you say that Mrs. Feldmann had doubts about her husband's sanity? Because several times, at Rio, Mr. Feldmann has told me that his wife was a little mad!"

That was all he said; but the words, and still more the tone in which they were spoken, confirmed my suspicions that the Admiral was better posted in the family feuds than he made out. I tried to make him speak out.

"You are a friend of the Feldmann family then?" I asked.

He answered that he had met the husband when he visited New York in command of the Brazilian fleet—

the Loewenthals were the Brazilian bankers—and that Feldmann, when he came to Rio, had tried to get on intimate terms with him, possibly because he was a man to whom positions of dignity and importance greatly appealed. He told me further that Feldmann's father was a Warsaw banker, a native of Frankfort; that, being a cousin of Loewenthal, who was already established at New York, he had been admitted by him at the time of the War of Secession to a share in the loans to the Union. These loans had been the prelude to other more important enterprises, so that the young Frederick, who had been sent over to the Loewenthals to obtain an insight into American affairs, had remained in America. Finally he told me that Feldmann had accepted from a syndicate of banks and from the Government a commission of investigation into the potentialities of Southern America from the point of view of North America, with a view to entering the diplomatice service of the Republic. "Another caprice of my wife's," the husband called it. "One of my husband's many whims," said the wife. But when I tried to make the Admiral talk about the intimate affairs of the family, repeating to him the question I had already put some days before, and asking him whether the husband and wife did or did not get on together, he answered that he thought they did; but again spoke with a vagueness which to me suggested reticence.

At this point Cavalcanti and Alverighi joined us as we paced up and down.

"Admiral," cried Alverighi as soon as he caught sight of him, "do tell me, what do you think is the sure criterion of progress? My good friend Vazquez came on the scene five minutes too soon last night."

The Admiral demurred at first at this brusque attack; then, blushing like a shy schoolboy under *viva-voce* examination, said:

"The world is an ordered arrangement. . . . Everything in it obeys immutable laws; the planets which revolve in space, the ball which issues from the cannon's mouth, the plant which grows, the screw whose revolutions propel this ship, man, his thoughts, nations, civilisations. These laws are immutable, but obscure, and difficult to discover; indeed, man at first imagined that the universe was a chaos of capricious forces, and for that reason was terror-struck, let himself go, and committed every kind of mad and violent act. He was ignorant, selfish, and cruel. But the planets did not await the births of Newton and Kepler to revolve according to the laws of Newton and Kepler. So it is that man obeys the laws of his nature, even when he is not conscious of them; imperfectly and with many slips as long as he is not conscious of them, better and more precisely according as his knowledge of them grows. Among these laws is the law of progress, which impels him to pass from egoism to altruism, from disorder to order, as he discovers the laws which regulate the marvellous order of the universe. First he creates the mathematical sciences, then the physical and chemical, and then the biological sciences; he discovers the laws of number and of space, of movement, of material and of life. He is now girding himself up to take the last step . . . I mean, he is now investigating the laws of human nature and of social life, in order to reduce to order, in the family as in the state, the chaos of passions and of egoisms. . . . 'Order and progress' is the motto on the yellow and green flag of Brazil."

"August Comte!" I said with a smile. I recognised the simple and ingenuous spirit of order proper to Latin America in the fervour with which the Admiral announced to the world the universal sway of science.

"You identify, then, science and progress?" observed Cavalcanti.

The Admiral assented. He added that scientific results could be counted, so that a quantitative criterion of progress was not inconceivable. One could say positively that a student of a technical institute to-day was a more learned physicist than Galileo, and a wiser chemist than Lavoisier. Alverighi did not assent or make any remark, beyond saying that the riches of America have been and are the most powerful factor in scientific progress. We then discussed August Comte.

"*À propos*," interrupted Alverighi, "Signor Cavalcanti has told me that at Rio de Janeiro they affect the Cult of Humanity founded by Comte. It seems that there is to be a temple built in imitation of the Pantheon at Paris."

The Admiral nodded assent. Cavalcanti said that the Brazilian republic had been founded by Comtists. I mentioned that, when at Rio, I had visited the little Temple of Humanity in Rua Benjamin Constant, and had had an interesting talk on many subjects with the chief priest, Signor Texeira Mendes. The bell called us to luncheon. Rosetti was not present, so the conversation was frivolous. Luncheon ended, we retired for the siesta, after ascertaining that at noon we had reached 3° 22′ N. lat. and 27° 38′ long.

When I came out, about four o'clock, I realised that the steamer was rolling and pitching heavily. I looked

at the sea: it was not violently agitated, nor was it covered with white horses, but it was seesawing quietly and smoothly in valleys and hills, which, though swollen, had not the strength to break. And yet the motion of the steamer was as if a storm were raging, so that I was not at all surprised when a passing stewardess told me that my wife was not feeling well. I hastened to her cabin and made her drink a most efficacious antidote against seasickness, which the surgeon on board the *Savoie* had prescribed for her on the crossing from Havre to New York. I stayed with her till she went to sleep. I then went out on to the promenade deck, which was deserted; I went up to the boat deck, hoping to find somebody there, and saw the Admiral, Cavalcanti, and Alverighi sitting in a circle to leeward on the port side. A fourth chair stood by empty. At the first glance from a distance I gathered from their gestures and faces that they were engaged in an animated discussion. In point of fact the Admiral, as I took the empty chair, was saying emphatically, with a touch of contempt:

"Science false, essentially false? Do you consider, Signor Ferrero," he added by way of welcome, as I came up, "that the world is a mass of disorder, and that science is false?"

"Ye gods, what an upset!" I thought to myself.

Cavalcanti told me how they had all three met Signor Rosetti an hour earlier and had renewed the morning's discussion on the subject of science; that Signor Rosetti had asked the Admiral if he, like August Comte, believed that science was true, and whether Comte had not made the mistake of accepting the world as the senses presented it to him, exactly like the rustic and the artisan. It seemed, however, that

he had not been able to finish his proof, because he had felt unwell and had retired.

"And I will follow his example," said Alverighi suddenly, who had been (wonder of wonders!) perfectly quiet up to then. "This is an impossible sea." And he nodded to us and hurried away.

"It wanted an attack of seasickness," said the Admiral smiling, "to keep him quiet."

He rose and went to the side, looked at the sea and shook his head.

"It 's what the sailors of your country call a *mare a giardinetto*—the dead sea which follows a storm. Look how the sea is beating on the quarter, where in the old ships they used to put the flower-pots, *il giardinetto*. Only strong stomachs can stand it—I congratulate you on yours. But the dining-room will be deserted to-night."

At dinner time even Cavalcanti had vanished; so the Admiral and I dined alone with the captain. I turned in soon, and got up late on Friday morning. I spent the time before luncheon loitering about between the deserted deck and my wife's cabin, chatting with her, reading, and looking at the sea; the "dead sea" as the Admiral had called it, a happy epithet, as the long sweep without foam or fracture gave an exact impression of a sea without life. I also paid a visit to Rosetti, and told him of the Admiral's dismay. I asked him if he had really affirmed that science was false; but he treated the matter as a joke, and did not explain what he really thought. At noon, after a solitary luncheon, we reached 8° 12′ lat. and 25° 38′ long. I withdrew for the siesta, and did not come out again till half past four, when, bored and resigned to a patient wait for the sea to go down before renewing our interesting dis-

cussions, I went up to do something or other on the upper deck. There I was surprised to find Mrs. Feldmann, sitting quietly in a chair and busy writing in a note-book.

"Bravo!" I cried. "Every one's ill except you."

"Did n't I tell you," she said, with a smile, holding out her hand, "that I was made for a sea-rover?"

We exchanged a few commonplace remarks; then, suddenly laying down her pencil on the paper, she said with an insinuating smile:

"Monsieur Ferrero, vous devriez me rendre un service. . . . The Admiral knows all about my husband, I 'm quite sure: but he won't tell me anything. Do you please make him speak out. You men know how to manage these things amongst yourselves."

"She 's guessed it," I said to myself.

But, having already sounded the Admiral to no purpose, I expressed my doubts, adding that I would try and see what I could do. Then, encouraged by her question, I at last ventured on an indiscreet but necessary question of my own:

"To come to the point, did you get on all right with your husband, or did you not? For I have never been able to make out; and that seems to me the crux of the whole business. And who can solve it better than you?"

I was afraid I should embarrass her; instead, she looked at me in surprise, and replied:

"Why, I have already told you, Frederick has always been a model husband, and I am not aware that I have ever been a bad wife."

At this I assumed a rather magisterial air.

"Mrs. Feldmann, you are talking to a historian, and history can read the thoughts even of the dead; how

much more, then, those of the living? What you tell me now does not fit in with a great many other things you have told my wife and me."

And I reminded her of all she had said about her husband, telling her that a historian deduced from her cutting remarks serious schism in the family, just as an Alpine climber suspected crevasses on the mountains from the colour of the snow.

She listened to me attentively, gazing steadily at me as if anxious to absorb my thoughts through the double channel of ears and eyes; then, as if after much labour and thought a light had suddenly flashed upon her, she cried:

"But all the trouble only began after we had gone to live in Madison Avenue."

The answer was so simple, that I in my turn could only reply by asking her, with a touch of sarcasm, where they had lived before that.

"In 56th Street, to the east near the Park."

"So in changing from 56th Street to Madison Avenue your husband changed his character too?"

"Anything but!" she answered. "Consider, for instance, I am mad on two arts, painting and music; and, modesty apart, I do know something about them. For instance, when I go into an exhibition or a museum, one glance round is enough, and I can spot *the* picture in the room. Very well, then; as long as we lived in 56th Street, my husband only looked at pictures through my eyes. 'I don't want to visit museums and exhibitions without Isabelle,' he used to say. And how I loved educating him! We used to economise together, and, when we had put by a little pile, off we went to Europe together to buy. After Madison Avenue, alas! the spell was broken even in art; the

pupil rebelled. It was in Madison Avenue that my husband began to go on just like that man on board here who is always talking. Every week he would come out with some new idea, which was bizarre and impossible, and had no connection with that of the week before. One day he would go mad on old English furniture. Another day he raved about Japanese vases. Next, French ivories were the only thing in the world for him. Then it was the turn for majolica, faïence, and the French art of '30. And he bought absolutely at random, beautiful and ugly, real and sham. What a lot of sham he did buy! Often, after buying it, he found that he had nowhere to put it; or he got a sudden fit of stinginess, and would not pay the American customs, so that the stuff was left in a warehouse in Europe. We have any amount of it scattered about in all the four corners of the world. 'I know it 's mine, that 's enough for me," he would say, when I grumbled. 'Why should I want to see it every day?' I only tell you this to make you understand my tragedy."

"Your tragedy? Come, don't let us exaggerate."

"My tragedy, I tell you. Do you suppose that it did not make my heart bleed to see my husband the laughing-stock and pigeon of curio-dealers? He no longer took any notice of my opinion; for I never beat about the bush, and I told him straight out to his face, as a good wife should, that he ought to stick to his own business, the making of millions, and not bother about buying *objets de vertu* about which he knew absolutely nothing whatever. He, however, having made a lot of money, became possessed with the idea of becoming a great connoisseur, like Nero; and the dealers, who are regular devils to swindle, quickly discovered his weak point. When I am not there,

they pass off on to him all sorts of trash and horrors, telling him that only the Americans can shake themselves free from the yoke of the academical prejudices of Europe, and giving him to understand that in a few years he 'll be able to sell what he buys for twenty times the price. That 's how it is. I'm sorry for you, as you still have some illusions left; but you remember, once a banker always a banker. Did n't he go one day and buy a picture by Van Gogh? Bless me if he was n't turning a Cubist! But that picture never crossed my doormat. That time I rebelled, and threatened to——"

And she burst into a merry laugh, looking at me with eyes sparkling with gay malice.

"What did you threaten to do?"

What, did not transpire; she turned the conversation, saying:

"Usually, however, I gave in, for that is the lot of us poor women. But my poor home! He made a regular bazaar of it. When I think that at that time we had money by the shovelful, and might have bought such a lot of beautiful things!"

"We had money by the shovelful!" This provoked my curiosity to ask her when they had gone to live in Madison Avenue.

"In 1902," she answered. Then, resuming the thread of her remarks, she said quickly: "For many years we lived in a small way. My husband only inherited seven millions from his father."

I made a gesture of surprise, which she understood.

"Seven millions are a lot in Europe. But in America . . . In the bank he earned a good deal, it is true; but, imagine it, at his father's death he had the idea for a moment of leaving the bank and becoming professor

of political economy at Columbia University! I only wish he had! We lived a secluded life, like worthy middle-class folk in comfortable circumstances, without any luxury and with but few friends. What we had were nearly all University professors, from Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, or Yale. I, however, used to spend only six months in New York, from November to April. At the beginning of April I used to go to France with my daughter. Frederick joined me in July and spent those months with me in Europe. . . ."

"You did not like New York, then?"

The answer was not what I expected.

"I should not like," she said after a moment's hesitation, "to say that I liked it; no, I could n't quite say that. Nor could I say that I disliked it. Every November I was glad to get back to it, and to say good-bye to the hills of Havre."

"Because you were so confident of seeing them again in six months' time."

"Possibly. All the same with the first fogs and cold of autumn a longing for New York came back to me. I felt as if I were going on a fantastic voyage towards an unknown city, placed outside of the world and of time. That man who is always talking said the first evening that New York gave him the impression of an astral city. Well, for once in a way he was right. I too felt I was being transported to another planet, or into one of the fairy cities of my childhood. I found there all the things of the earth, but out of place, in a topsy-turvy order, the distant brought close, the close distant, the small become great and the great small. I don't know whether I make myself clear. This voyage from the earth to the fantastic planet and from the planet to the real earth twice a year, was one of

my greatest distractions. It was a pleasure to go, and a pleasure to come back, because, to speak candidly, New York tired me. After a while I felt the need of returning to earth and seeing things in their proper place." She paused a minute, and then said: "Is n't it curious? At New York one might say that there are no two buildings alike. Yet, two months after I have got back to it, New York oppresses me with its monotony. In Paris on the other hand you have great uniformity: whole quarters are built in a similar style of architecture. How is it, then, that Paris never tires me, but always seems different?"

The remark was startlingly original, but I did not answer the question, because I wanted to pursue my investigation.

"In short, you were happy, at least until you went to live in that unfortunate house in Madison Avenue. But why, then, did you not want to marry him? You confessed the other day that you did not."

She blushed slightly with embarrassment.

"You see . . . I was very young at the time. . . . Quite a child still. . . . Besides, there are such a lot of things girls know nothing about. I did not know him. He was brought to our house by friends, who wanted to make a match of it. My mother was in the plot. The first impression he made on me. . . . It may sound strange to you. He made me laugh. . . . He was so bashful!"

"Bashful?"

"To be sure," she answered. Then she began to laugh spasmodically, as if anxious to restrain herself, but unable to do so. "He was round, fat, short-sighted, and clumsy. And you never saw such awkwardness! He blushed whenever a girl looked at him or spoke to

him. But my mother told me that Frederick was a wonderful catch, and that he was one of the budding Crœsuses of America. My father told me the same: my brother, my uncle, my aunts, my governess, and my maid all harped on the same string. How could a young girl hold out against such a coalition as that?"

At that moment a puff of wind struck us, making the ropes round us rattle in their heavy iron rings, whistling through the shrouds, and cutting off our conversation. I turned to look at the sea. On the grey expanse of the water, under the sunless sky, the dead sea was coming to life again, and was breaking into little white horses; but the *Cordova* continued to pitch and to roll, stopping for an instant now and again, then suddenly throwing up her stern, only to fall back again slowly and solemnly at full length on the water and to pursue her journey over the solitary ocean, which, from the now-deserted ship, seemed more lonely and wild than ever. But the very sense of solitude seemed to encourage confidences; I felt no longer any scruple about asking indiscreet questions, as if we had known each other for years and years. My diffidence vanished, while my curiosity increased, because the continual contradictions in Mrs. Feldmann's confidences puzzled me. Did she love her husband, did she detest him, or was she indifferent to him? I asked straight out:

"In short, do you regret having married him or not? The other night, as well as just now, you said you did. On the other hand, a short while ago you attributed your want of sympathy with him to inexperience."

She did not answer directly, but said:

"I think my parents ought to have stopped the

wedding. In fact my father did think of doing so at one time. A couple of angry outbursts from my husband during the engagement frightened him."

"How was that, if he was so bashful?"

"So he was usually, but when he flew into a passion! . . . And he would do so over mere trifles. But my mother reassured my father. My mother was an angel, but she thought that a lot of money spelt happiness."

"Well then, how did the first years of married life go off? Pretty badly, I expect!"

"By no means. He is a lucky man, is Frederick, and a stroke of luck fell to him at once. On the honeymoon I got typhoid at Venice. I must say he was admirable in those distressing circumstances. You never saw such trouble as he took! I really should not have thought him capable of it." She checked herself in time, and went on: "As you can suppose, this proof of affection touched me, and conquered me. I began to discover in him all the good qualities he had . . . and he had several: brains, wit, culture, even courtesy . . . at times. Besides, he was really in love with me, there was no doubt about that," she added with a smile. "I repeat, that my husband has always been a model husband. The world may be able to show his equals, but it cannot his superiors. Gradually I softened towards him; heaven knows, we all have our defects; we are put into the world to bear with one another, are n't we? Then began our life together, half the year in New York and half in France: these two worlds, my friends, and my daughter."

"In short, you in your turn fell in love with him," I concluded, hoping to extort a precise answer.

"My conscience tells me that I have not been a bad

wife, and that I have done all I could to make my husband happy."

She stopped and looked at me. At that moment the electric lamps on the deck lit up, shining faintly in the twilight. It began to grow dark: the puffs of wind came stronger and more frequent. The *Cordova* continued to pitch and to roll among the foam-topped waves of the sea. We ploughed along towards the night.

"In conclusion, then," I said, by way of breaking the silence, "in those first years you were not unhappy."

"By no means. Besides, he improved, I cannot deny it. He let me tame and refine him. I made the barbarian into quite a civilised being," she added, with a mixture of pride and acrimony, which again shook me in my opinion. She hated him, then, after all!

"The troubles then," I said, to sound her again, "began when you went to live in Madison Avenue!"

"I should think so!" she answered. "That house brought me bad luck. And to think that we were so happy in the old house in 56th Street! I was loath to clear out, and cried. I had a presentiment of what was coming. But after having gained so many millions over the 'Great Continental' business, my husband wanted a much larger house, in which to entertain and spread himself. 'We are so rich now,' he used always to say, 'that we can allow ourselves so and so!' That 's an argument I cannot understand. I may be a fool, but while I can understand spending money because it gives one pleasure, I cannot understand spending it simply because one has it." Here she stopped herself, and said suddenly: "But I 'm boring you with

these petty details of my private affairs. Please forgive me. Let 's talk of something more interesting to yourself."

I protested against her assumption: and, encouraged by the readiness with which she had told me the sum total of her husband's inheritance from his father, I asked myself whether I might risk a question which went rather beyond what good manners would allow. I decided to do so.

"Excuse my curiosity, but did your husband make much over the 'Continental' ?"

"A great deal, and not over that business only. The years from 1902 to 1906 were regular years of gold."

Again I hesitated, and again took the plunge.

"And what might your husband 's fortune amount to, now?"

I thought she would evade the question; but no, she answered:

"I don't know exactly; such fortunes, as you know, are always fluctuating. But I have heard my brother say that Frederick must now have more than one hundred millions."

"Great heavens!" I cried, really thunderstruck. "Then those women on board are n't so far wrong after all."

And I told her that she was held in great awe by her fellow-passengers as a multi-millionairess. This amused her greatly, and she said:

"Now I understand why that Signor Levi comes and offers me every morning pearls or diamonds or emeralds or sapphires, always asking me at least double the proper price. He thinks I 'm a fool and don't know anything about them. But he 's a smart fellow who

can take me in where jewels, carpets, and pictures are concerned!"

"An hereditary gift!" I thought, while she began to recount to me some of her cleverest deals.

I let her go on for a while, for politeness' sake; then, to bring her back to the main topic, said:

"You said, then, that when you went to live in Madison Avenue——"

"Exactly!" she sighed. "We laid aside our simple life, and began to entertain and to make a great splash. I too became, I don't mind saying so, a personage in my own small way; I had a little court of my own. And away went happiness!"

"I understand," I interrupted quickly and slyly. "Temptations came to your husband, as to all rich men who mix in modern life. . . . And the flesh is weak."

But I had missed the mark here.

"Not at all," she answered decidedly. "I have never once made a jealous scene, because I must own that I have never had any motive or reason for doing so."

"I cannot understand, then, what troubles can have arisen. For families so rich as yours, that is the one rock of danger in the treacherous sea of social life. I don't suppose it can have been debts."

"You might have been right if my husband had not been a man without judgment, discretion, or one grain of good sense. We ought to have been happy, ought we not? If there was one person in the world born to be happy with but little, or even with next to nothing, it was I. A flower, a landscape, a ray of light, or a baby is enough to fill me with joy. I can enjoy all beautiful things intensely. I cannot understand how any one can think that the poor ought to be unhappy

just because they are poor. In fact, every one envies me. And yet . . . the richer I was, the less happiness I had. Ever since we went to live in Madison Avenue ill luck has dogged me. Everything has gone wrong with me. Life for me has been a continual and useless struggle. Much use have they been to me, those riches of America! The most miserable chickweed-seller in New York has been happier than I!"

"All because your husband's and your taste in pictures and furniture did not agree!"

Her concluding words, sounding like heartfelt sobs in the night, the darkness, and the wind, conquered my diffidence; all the same, I hardly thought her lamentations, though I did not doubt their sincerity, had a very adequate foundation. But she did not give me time to continue.

"Certainly, that was one reason!" she retorted almost roughly. "I cannot live amongst ugly things, antipathetic people, or tiresome obligations. My husband aspired to a social position in New York. He was quite right; so did I. I have none of the tastes of a hermit. But why need we desert our old and good friends in the search for new, insufferable ones? I had been happy during the first few years: six months in New York, six in France. And I had such a lot of genuine friends in America, unassuming people, if you like, for the most part, but well-educated, refined, and agreeable: University professors, writers, and artists. But, for some reason or other, when we got to Madison Avenue my husband took a dislike to them all, and one by one they forgot the address of our house. They were quite right; but as for me, I have not got over it yet. When I think of those who took their place! All rolling in money, of course. I have had the honour of

having I don't know how many hundred million francs to dinner in a single evening. But they were, oh! so dull . . . just as dull as only financiers can be! My husband on the contrary was happy, and if I showed any signs of boredom, there were fine scenes! What pleasure he could find in society of that sort, I 'm sure I don't know."

"The pleasure of meeting on equal terms people who, if he had not gained so many millions, would not have deigned to look at him!"

She pouted, and said:

"What a pleasure, must n't that be? Divine, supernatural, heavenly!"

"But crossing the line also is n't exactly a divine pleasure; and yet you have seen for yourself! Man is made like that."

"Man is an incredible imbecile!" she answered promptly.

"And you," I laughed, "are a dangerous anarchist."

"Because I don't want to be bored when I want to amuse myself? Because I want amusements to amuse as much as bores bore? I 'm a whimsical, arrogant, lunatic, impossible woman, am I not? Do you think so, just as my husband did? In revenge, I hope you may be bored as much as I have been since we went to live in Madison Avenue. I did n't know when I should be able to travel to Europe again. For two years I have been without a peep of Paris and my friends there. It 's been nothing but dinners, receptions, charity bazaars, theatres, race-meetings, *tableaux vivants*, country visits, whether I wanted to or not and whether they gave me any pleasure or not. Because if we had n't shown ourselves, New York

society would have forgotten us. What a dreadful prospect! For in New York it 's no joke; even life in society is a battle. If a man leaves his post for a second, another comes up and takes it; you must always be on the spot to account for your own self. At dinner-parties, receptions, and every sort of amusement, the Americans have always given me the impression of being soldiers under fire, or people commanded to amuse themselves in a certain way, even if they were bored, as a duty comparable with that of sticking to one's post in battle."

"Life in society," I remarked, "as everywhere else, is a great illusion."

She did not heed my remark, but went on:

"If I had only known! I should have forced my husband to return to Europe after his father's death. Sooner than gain millions, only to see me ousted by the countess."

"By the countess?" I asked with a smile. "What countess?"

"No, no," she answered quickly, reading my smile in a flash. "It 's not at all what you think: it 's far worse. The countess ——" and she pronounced a German name. "Don't you know her? She was lady-in-waiting to —— and she named a royal princess in the old world, who had been dead for some time. " She 's an old horror, and ugly as sin!"

At that moment the first dinner-bell rang. Mrs. Feldmann stopped, saying that she did not wish to bother me any further with her pointless remarks. But the confidences were at last pouring out in too copious a flood to miss; so I protested that I was much interested, and asked her how she had come to know the countess. She replied that the countess had become

acquainted with an American family whose name is well known in Europe, and had presented them in Paris to the princess on whom she attended. This family, grateful for the honour, had invited the countess to America, whither after the death of the princess she had gone every year, staying there five or six months. The Feldmanns had known her in New York, and the husband had conceived a great admiration for her.

"Because she belonged to the flunkeydom of a European court, she was an oracle! She laid down the law on manners and *comme il faut* in my own house. I, when the illustrious countess spoke, had to listen, keep quiet, and learn! And do you know what she did to me one fine day? For some time I had been trying to persuade my husband to buy some old historical castle in France. It would have been such fun restoring it in style. I was born an architect. I should have made a good job of that castle, you may be sure. My husband wavered for a time, frightened at the expense, and then seemed convinced. But one day he changed his mind all of a sudden, and decided to buy a steam yacht. Just fancy! And he feels seasick at the slightest thing! When he took it into his head to start a stable, I could at least teach him to stick on (though he found that no easy matter, he was in such a fright) for I am a first-rate horsewoman, I may tell you. But I could not lend him my stomach! I told him so again and again; but it was no good. Do you know why? Because that blessed countess had expressed the opinion that one could not be a perfect man of the world, in America, without a steam yacht. She wanted to scour the seas at our expense, the old hag, just as she gambled on 'change at our expense. She

lost and he paid! You perhaps think a financier could not be such a stupid——"

Again she was drifting off into abuse of her husband, to my disgust, so I said:

"You take things too seriously. In New York, as everywhere else, a stranger, however rich he may be, can only win a social position by watching his opportunities, adapting himself to the habits of others, and patiently putting up with disappointments and even a humiliation or two; above all, by spending and spreading himself. The world is made like that——"

"But not by buying a position!" she interrupted almost violently.

"Buying? The word sounds ugly. But you must be reasonable. Some sacrifice——"

"But do you know what the countess used to do, when the princess was alive? The princess used to spend double her income, and could not give her a farthing of pay. So she consented to receive every one the countess might present to her, without too searching a scrutiny. The countess naturally drove a trade on a small scale in presentations, based on a regular tariff."

I laughed.

"That it is a satisfactory state of affairs, I won't pretend. But to-day Europe is burdened by a regular rabble of dukes, archdukes, and princes of the blood. They must do what they can to live, poor things! And you, a multi-millionairess, should take pity on them."

"No, no," she answered. "There are things one cannot buy with money. I too wanted to have a social position in New York, but pay for it in hard cash I would not."

"The rich man must pay for everything nowadays, even for what ought in all reason to be gratis, and is

gratis for most people; such as friendship, admiration, glory . . . even love."

"But does that seem right to you?"

"It 's one of the compensations our times offer to the poor. Otherwise the rich would get everything, both what can only be bought for gold, and what should be obtainable gratis."

"It is better to be poor, then."

"I am not sure," I answered with a shrug. "I am sure that it is very much easier." And I added: "Your feeling does you credit. Only . . . I 'm speaking generally, of course, you must not take offence: but in many people a feeling like yours goes hand in hand, and is even apt to be confused, with another less creditable feeling, which is,—avarice. For instance, the men who protest that they will not pay for love, because love which is paid for withers away, are sometimes poets, but sometimes simply misers."

She looked at me with a subtle smile, and said:

"I am a bit of a miser, I confess." Then her thoughts suddenly flew back to the yacht. "But that yacht," she said laughing, "avenged me. The first time we went out, what a storm we had! We nearly went to the bottom. He suffered atrociously, thought we were lost, and called on every saint in the calendar to help! . . . I laugh now, when I think of it. When we got back to New York, he refused to set eyes on her again. She rusted for six months in harbour. Then one fine day he sold her at a day's notice for half what he gave for her. That trip came pretty expensive!"

Such heartless amusement glittered in her eyes during her story that again I asked myself whether she did not detest her husband, and felt myself impelled to defend him.

"But after all," I said, "what you tell me is hardly a tragedy. You are complaining of having been condemned to death by starvation, only because destiny has chosen to feed you on too sweet biscuits. In short, allow me to say frankly that, with a little patience——"

"Do you suppose I had n't any? Why, in the end it was always I who gave in."

"But only after resisting, protesting, and fighting."

"Naturally; because I was always in the right!"

"And you think it no great crime always to be in the right?" I asked with a smile; then added: "In this world a spice of philosophy is a necessity; whether one wins or loses, one must do it with a good grace."

"Even when the education and future of one's own daughter are at stake?" she asked me suddenly, looking me straight in the face. "But you want to go to dinner; it is late, and this conversation cannot interest you."

Again I protested; and after some hesitation and a long sigh, she went on:

"You who know such a lot of things, do you think that an illness can transform a person's character? My daughter was an angel. When she was twelve, she caught typhoid, and hung for two months between life and death. What months those were! How many times did I pray God to take me and to save her! God spared her, and spared me alas! too. After that illness Judith became a demon. She found it necessary always and on every occasion to do the opposite of what she was told. Just imagine what happened when we went to Madison Avenue. I had such a lot to do that she was relegated to the second floor with a governess, and I saw her, perhaps once every day. Her father, instead of helping me, encouraged her,

through weakness and a horror of scenes. 'Let her go. That 's how the new generation are made. America is the land of liberty. Let me enjoy my home in comfort; I have such a lot of worries outside.' You see the kind of father he was. And the fruits of this sort of education—" She stopped a moment, as if searching for an example; then said suddenly: "We are a family of bankers, it 's true; but not of ignoramuses. We have always set store by education. Both my husband and I have relations who are University professors. Now would you believe that—I don't say that I have not succeeded in instilling into Judith some taste for literature or for art; but that . . . I am ashamed to say it to you . . ." and she dropped her voice. "I have n't yet read one letter of hers in English or in French . . . which was not crammed full of mistakes in spelling."

I smiled to see the look of consternation and confusion with which she confided to me this dreadful secret about her wretched offspring. To console her, I told her that not in America only, but in Europe as well, it is not rare to find families who have been educated for some generations back, but whose rising generation seem to be imbued with a strange horror of ink, pen, and books.

"One would say," I concluded, "that nowadays ignorant families want to educate themselves, and educated families to revert to ignorance. Naturally, what interested your daughter was clothes, balls, horses, lawn-tennis, and sport."

She nodded, and added with a smile:

"Not to mention good-looking young men. In this respect too she was no daughter of mine. She was hardly seventeen when she protested that she did not

want to die an old maid, and accused me of preventing her from marrying out of sheer contrariness. Just fancy! One day I lost my temper, and told her that in my day a girl of her age would never have even thought of such things. Do you know what she answered? *'Que vous êtes vieux jeu, maman!'* I almost . . ." She stopped, while a vague look of complacency shone in her eyes; then dropping her voice said: "I almost felt inclined to believe that she was a little jealous. Once she told me in a pet that when we were together the men only paid attention to me! In the end, before she was nineteen, we married her off fairly well. I hoped I should have a little peace afterwards, but some malignant star dogs me. Judith had no sooner gone off to Europe than the 'Great Continental' scandal broke out. What months those were! When I think of them! Do you remember the scandal? Even in Europe it made a great deal of noise."

I answered in the affirmative. She then asked me if I could explain to her clearly the reason for the scandal, which she had never understood, for all that she had been in the very thick of it. I told her that Underhill at a certain moment had sold a large number of "Great Continental" bonds, and with the money had made a big purchase of shares in a rival northern railway, in order to get it out of the hands of the financiers who controlled it. The latter in their turn hurried on 'change and returned the compliment. In the end, the shares being pretty evenly divided, the two groups realised that they had better come to some arrangement; which they did, and formed what the Americans call a "pool." But the Supreme Court, judging the two railways to be rivals, declared the

"pool" to be illegal. Underhill then sold the shares in the rival company, so cleverly and at such a favourable moment, that he pocketed a profit of sixty million dollars, or three hundred million francs. This large sum he spent in buying shares in a great many other railways, which were not competing, though connected with his in the capacity of feeders. But one day Underhill's enemies succeeded in inducing the "Interstate Commerce Commission" to hold an inquiry into the "Great Continental." The Commission exposed these purchases, whereupon, without going into subtle distinctions between connected and competing railways, America burst into fury. Underhill was accused of wishing to establish a novel and terrible tyranny in the heart of America. He was threatened with actions and prosecutions, and insults and calumnies were heaped on his head. But in course of time the public wrath boiled away. After all, the law does, as a matter of fact, distinguish between competing and connected railways.

Mrs. Feldmann listened to me attentively, then said:

"I think I understand now. The debatable point, then, was whether the railways bought by Underhill were parallel or perpendicular to the "Great Continental."

I made a gesture of assent.

"And now I understand also," she continued, "the discussions which used to take place between my husband and Underhill. One evening, I remember, Underhill had come to dinner with us. There was no party, only just the three of us. I see him now, thin and pale, with his clerical face, and the soft, bright eyes behind his glasses. 'What I intend to do is useful, just, and necessary,' he said. 'The railways

are the arteries of America. The quicker, cheaper, and better organised her railways are, the richer, more powerful, and happier will America be. They say that there are laws in my way; for men are not perfect, whether they make laws or railways. But I require irrefutable arguments to convince me that the law can stop me from doing good. If there 's a doubt—well, if there 's a doubt, I 'll take the risk of breaking the law, to prove to people that the law is unjust and improvident.' And I can see my husband, fat, smooth, and spruce, listening to him with a perplexed and thoughtful air. And do you know what he answered? 'My dear Underhill, to respect the laws is not enough, nor is it perhaps the most important thing; what is of paramount importance is, that the public should think that we respect them. Laws are made to give the masses the illusion that the state defends them against the powerful and the over-powerful, real and imaginary. To-day the masses have got it into their heads that we rich are their tyrants and enemies: and I much doubt, even if what you want to do is legal, whether you 'll get the public to believe that it is. What good will it do us then to have respected the laws, if the mob cry that we have broken them? The newspapers and the courts will be afraid of the mob. It would be much better to break them really and to make believe that we have respected them.' Why did my husband take that line?—can you understand?"

I could not help telling her that her husband, that time at any rate, had shown considerable wisdom and acumen. But my answer annoyed her.

"Men," she answered rather fretfully, "always back each other up. But you should have seen my husband, when the scandal burst! As usual, he lost

his head. He could not sleep or eat; every newspaper, every telegram, every letter which arrived, he almost fainted. It was really comic!"

"Comic?"

"Yes, comic. And the way he raved against Underhill behind his back, calling him a scoundrel, an image with feet of clay, even a Nebuchadnezzar. Besides, at that point every one had lost his head, except, of course, Underhill. He was a man, a great man, a hero! I wish you could have seen him, and written his history. You 'd have found him a worthy subject. They summoned him, they searched for him, they wrote to him, telephoned to him. They implored him to take leave, to go to Europe, to resign. They offered him large sums in compensation. They screamed at him to make him say, write, or do something in his own defence. It was no good. He did not go, he did not say a word, he just went on with his business as if nothing had happened. 'If I have broken the laws, let them take proceedings. I 'll plead to a court of justice, but not to the newspapers. Let the public mind their own business, not mine.' They pointed out to him that he might have successfully rebutted the charges brought against him, but he only answered that the public were a pack of fools. 'Let them shout; they 'll stop when they 're out of breath.' He was a hero, I tell you; and he saved them all, for in fact the public did stop when they were out of breath; and nothing further happened. But as for us . . . I really don't know what would have become of us poor people, if it had n't been for Miss Robbins. She was our salvation!"

She told me then that this Miss Robbins was a young Englishwoman, of good family, who had been

ruined by her mother's extravagance, and had joined a kind of Protestant nursing order.

"Such a splendid creature, she was! Tall, with fair hair and marvellous blue eyes, a beautiful figure and complexion. . . . And, besides, so quick, intelligent, and refined. . . . She nursed Judith in her illness, and made her and all of us so fond of her that, when Judith was well again, we proposed to her that she should stop on with her as governess. But she became a sort of lady-companion and secretary to me, and the guardian-angel of the house. She alone could manage Judith. She even exercised, I must confess it, some control over my husband. When things were going rather too far, she would intervene, and with her tact and gentleness make everything smooth again. It was a real disaster," she concluded with a sigh, "that she could not make up her mind to come with us to Rio de Janeiro."

I asked her then why they had left New York. She told me that after the "Continental" scandal her husband had felt his position rather difficult in New York, so had accepted the mission to South America, which gave him a chance to lie low for a while without wasting time. I asked her how the three years in Rio had passed.

"Well enough," she answered. "He was very nervous, depressed, irritable, and preoccupied. . . . But he had never been a lively man, and no doubt his voluntary exile bored him. Anyway it was paradise compared to New York."

I stopped for an instant, thinking.

"In short," I said, "you are confident that there 's no woman at the bottom of all these misunderstandings?"

"Absolutely confident."

"Very well, then," I concluded, and my conclusion was a sincere one, "the case does not seem to me a grave one. This is how I should define it, if you will allow me. An already rich family becomes in a few years immensely rich. The husband is seized with a fit of the epidemic of snobbery. He wants to change his mode of life with greater speed and less deliberation than is to the taste of his wife, who is more refined, aristocratic, and proud than the husband; for the latter is impelled less by pride than by the vanity of the 'newly-arrived.' Hence we get continual quarrels. But with a little patience on either side everything ought to adjust itself, especially now that the daughter is not there to make a difficulty. There is one thing only to reproach the wife with: her admiration for Underhill, who is the cause of all her woes. If Underhill had not put Mr. Frederick Feldmann in the way of making so many millions, Mr. Frederick Feldmann would not have gone to live in Madison Avenue, would have continued, as in duty bound, to listen to the oracle of beauty speaking through his wife's mouth, would not have got to know the countess, nor have bought the yacht, nor changed his friends."

She smiled, and did not answer, but only asked, as if to confirm her own convictions:

"Then you don't believe he wants a divorce?"

"I 'm practically certain of it."

"But how do you explain the uncle's telegram, then?"

The objection was rather a difficult one to meet, for a critic who was intent on smoothing away all difficulties. All the same I answered that in New York, as in every city in the world, there is a great deal of

tittle-tattle. She looked at me, sighed, and said quietly:

"Let 's hope so! What day is it to-day?"

"Friday."

"The captain told me that we should reach the Canaries on Tuesday morning. Three days more, and I shall know." She pulled out her watch, and gave a little scream. "Why, it 's half past eight," she cried. "I 'm making you starve. I 'll go and dress, and shall be ready in a minute."

I was hungry and tried to persuade her to come down into the dining-room just as she was.

"It really is n't worth it. There 'll be no one there but I."

It was no good. The rite of dressing was a sacred one, and I had to wait till a quarter past nine before dining in the deserted dining-room. But my only companion was my beautiful friend, and that was some compensation!

CHAPTER V

I PONDERED for a long time that night in my cabin, and on Saturday morning when I woke up, on what Mrs. Feldmann had confided to me. I no longer doubted her sincerity; but it perplexed me no less than the dissimulation which I had at first suspected. Hers was a strange character and a curious mind to be sure! She was not a fool, anything but; she often argued with more than feminine assurance, and if she did not exactly adore her husband, at least she wished to live on good terms with him. And yet she had persisted deliberately and consciously—she had confessed it candidly—for twenty-two years, in errors which the instinct of an ignorant girl of twenty would have taught her to avoid at the very start. What a number of worthy women there are in the world who are too foolish to learn what even a brief experience can teach them, that they have only to flatter a man's vanity and refrain from trying to convert his inveterate and deep-rooted failings, and they can tyrannise over him in everything else. Mrs. Feldmann had adopted an exactly opposite line. She had continually wounded her husband's vanity and ruffled his egoism, without ever imposing her own will on him, even when she was justified in doing so, as in the matter of her daughter's education. And yet she did not strike me as a woman of weak will. How was the contradiction to be explained? Did it originate, partly at any rate, in the

lack of a certain kind of tact? Cheerful, frank, honest, but endowed with a rather rigid type of intellect, readier to talk about things effectively than to probe them to their depths—that is the sort of woman I judged her to be after our long conversation.

"If she had been a man," I thought, "she would have been a theologian, a mathematician, or a jurist."

I smiled for a moment at the idea of a mathematician's dry intellect dwelling in so fair a form. But on reflection I thought I could thus explain the fact that, instead of deftly taking advantage of her husband's weaknesses, she had thought it the right thing to tabulate and condemn them with logical sincerity, when all the time she was tormenting her husband with no profit to herself or to him. However, after further reflection, I thought that this by itself was not enough to explain the acuteness of their differences of opinions; for acute they obviously were. Then a new difficulty cropped up. Why did she repeat so obstinately that her husband was a model of devotion? Judging by her picture of him, no one could have said that. And in the end I asked myself if all their contradictions and differences might not be the effect of that mysterious confusion and want of balance, of that kind of double-mindedness which is the bane of so many of the Europeans who settle on the other side of the Atlantic. "The European who has made money in America can no longer live either in Europe or in America. When he is in America, he is always longing to be in Europe. When in Europe he is restless and wants to go back to America." This observation of a rich Italian, who had been our host at Paraná, came back to my mind. I remembered too a remark of Dr. Montanari's that a man cannot live between the two worlds, with one

foot in America, the other in Europe; and for the first time I thought I discerned a great truth outlined in the doctor's strange words. Were they not all minds at variance with themselves, these Europeans in America? There was Alverighi, whose ardent admiration for the new world was perhaps only a vehicle to express the sorrow he felt that he could no longer re-enter the old Europe which he had left in an hour of distress, save as a distant, unknown, and strange wayfarer laden with gold. There was Mrs. Feldmann too, who reproached America so bitterly for its vulgar riches and yet went so far as to forget her husband in her admiration of the most American of Americans, Richard Underhill, a man of daring and decision, but simple and unrefined, devoted only to the conquest of those vulgar riches she so much abhorred. This contradiction was, it is true, not a rare one among Europeans, who often hate America, yet admire its Crœsuses more than the Americans; but it was most singular in Mrs. Feldmann, who wanted her husband to be at once the oldest of Europeans and the youngest of Americans.

I discussed her story with my wife for a long time on Saturday morning. At noon we reached 13° 34′ lat. and 23° long. exactly; and in the afternoon the sea began at last to quiet down and the passengers to reappear. That evening Alverighi and Cavalcanti were at dinner, but not Rosetti. During the night the sea became calm, and on Sunday every one was present at luncheon: but the conversation was of no particular interest. Every one still felt the effects of what they had gone through. At noon we reached 18° 43′ lat. and 20° 4′ long. The afternoon was fresh and clear—we were getting on towards autumn—and we spent the time discussing various topics, especially the Canaries,

distant one and a half days from us, and the time of our arrival at Las Palmas. We had got half-way on our voyage; within a week, the next Sunday, if nothing happened, we should find ourselves in the streets of Genoa. A week is such a short time that one hardly notices it! The thought was a really pleasant one: it made us feel almost as if we had already arrived. And yet, when we cast our thoughts back, how far off seemed the day on which, in a lovely spring sunset, we had weighed anchor in the bay of Rio! Yet only eight days had passed; only one more than we should have to pass before coming in sight of the longed-for light of San Benigno. How long, then, a week can be! Nor could we "tire the Sun with talking and send him down the sky." Two days of storm and of suffering had passed like a huge wave over the excited discussions at the equator; and every one had forgotten progress, science, and the rest of our topics. I pondered, that day, on the dialectical weakness of our times. It is true that for a moment, in mid-ocean, our tedium had made us curious enough to examine the true meaning of certain words, such as "science" and "progress" which every one uses and whose meaning no one knows. . . . But a tiny movement of the sea had been enough to disturb and interrupt the game; for it is but a pastime of the idle nowadays to try to get a precise knowledge of the objects of everyday discussion.

And so we passed the time till dinner. During dinner a really strange event happened. Between the second and third courses Dr. Montanari came up, sat down, spread out his napkin with an even sulkier air than usual, and, regardless of the presence of the Admiral and Cavalcanti, said suddenly:

"Just listen! Really with these Americans, you never can tell what won't happen. *Cose da pazzi.*"

The new *pazzia* he had to relate to us was this. Two days before, the steward had told him that the young man from Tucumán was ill in bed. Surprised at not having been summoned to his bedside, he had decided to go and see him unasked that evening; but the wife had prevented him from entering the cabin, addressing a long tirade to him at the door, of which he had not understood a single word.

"She barked at me in English for a quarter of an hour. I think I understood her to say that she had no use for doctors! Will any one of you who knows English go and tell her to have done with her silly ideas! If she won't open the door, I 'll break it in. I must know what her husband is suffering from."

When dinner was over Cavalcanti and I, who spoke English rather less badly than the others, followed a stewardess down to the lower first-class cabins under the promenade deck.

She knocked at a door. Señora Yriondo—that was the American's name—came out, with a book in her left hand. The stewardess opened the door of the next cabin, which was empty, and we all three entered and sat down on two couches, Cavalcanti and I side by side, and the Señora facing us. In the middle of one side, high up, was the scuttle, through which entered the night air and the swish of the sea along the side. With her tall figure erect and drawn up, her arms folded, her book in her lap and her face turned slightly to the left in my direction, Señora Yriondo calmly waited for us to begin. Cavalcanti began his remarks with a form of preamble, regretting the necessity for disturbing her, when she was anxious about her hus-

band's illness; and was about to pass from the preamble to the exposition, when the Señora interrupted him, saying in a decided tone:

"But my husband is not ill!"

I thought I must have misunderstood her. Cavalcanti was so much disconcerted that he could only stammer that the doctor had assured us——

"It 's the doctor's business to believe in illnesses and to make us believe in them," answered the Señora. "But illnesses don't exist."

"Don't exist!" we cried almost simultaneously.

We all paused for an instant, staring at each other. Then Cavalcanti, with a rather sickly smile, said:

"And yet if you look round the world——"

"Oh!" answered the Señora in a deliberate tone of voice. "As long as men believe that cold can bring on rheumatism and phthisis, so long will they fall ill from the cold; though it won't be from the cold, but from their opinion about the cold."

Again we all paused, Cavalcanti and I hovering between embarrassment and a desire to laugh, the Señora sitting bolt upright with a determined air.

"And yet science . . ." I said at last, chiefly for the sake of saying something.

"In the garden of Eden," she answered firmly, "grew the tree of life and the tree of knowledge. For what reason did the serpent invite the man to taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and not of that of the tree of life? Because the science which pretends to classify illnesses is the scholastic product of matter. Matter does not exist."

This time there was a pause. Cavalcanti at once asked, half-seriously:

"What is there, then, which does exist?"

"The spirit, symbolised by the tree of life. What is an illness? A suffering which the supposed sick person thinks he feels in some organ of his body. But after death, when the spirit has gone out of the body, does he feel pain? Is there any drug, plaster, or science which can cure a corpse? Nevertheless alive or dead, what you call a body is always a body. Consequently that which lives, suffers, and thinks itself ill is the spirit."

"But what is the body then?" asked Cavalcanti, seriously this time.

"An illusion of the mortal spirit which imbues matter with intelligence. This matter gives birth to pain, illness, sin, and death. It is the serpent of Genesis, the great dragon of the Apocalypse!"

The woman was clearly mad. I lost patience; and, since Cavalcanti, curious enough to probe even nonsense of this sort, would not do so, I brought the conversation rather brusquely back to the object of our mission. I told the Señora that the doctor was bound to visit her husband, to judge whether his illness were infectious or not. She listened, exclaimed "It 's outrageous," and then stopped, sitting up stiff and motionless as if in thought.

"Does n't she understand, or is she pretending?" I said to myself.

I was on the point of insisting, when Cavalcanti interposed with more suavity:

"Let the doctor come. Your husband is n't in the least obliged to follow his prescriptions. But the doctor is bound to visit him, Señora. If it were an infectious illness . . . After all, the other passengers do believe in illnesses!"

But the American did not budge.

"If the doctor comes," she said, "he will ask him where he feels ill, and if he has been ill before. And then it would be more difficult for me to cure him."

"You are curing him, then?" cried Cavalcanti.

"Of one of those illnesses which don't exist?" I asked.

"And by what means?" added Cavalcanti.

"By Christian Science," answered the Señora.

At these words a ray of light at last dawned on me. Señora Yriondo belonged to that sect which Mrs. Eddy has founded in the United States under the name of "Christian Science," and which prohibits belief in medicine and the use of doctors. I had heard a good deal of talk about it in America, but I had never met one of its proselytes. And now chance had thrown a "Christian Scientist" in my way on board the *Cordova*. I no longer laughed when Cavalcanti asked what was Christian Science, hoping that I too might profit by Señora Yriondo's explanation.

"It is Christ," the Señora answered, "who has come back to the world to expel the dragon; that is to say, sin, illness, death, and hatred. Christ, that is, Truth, the spiritual Idea!"

It was a bad beginning. Her words were neither clear nor easy to understand. Cavalcanti asked her point-blank how she cured pneumonia.

"Illness," said the Señora, shirking the particular instance cited, "is nothing but a dream. It is necessary then to awake the patient. And we do awake him, persuading him step by step, quietly, that matter does not feel, suffer, or enjoy, because it does not exist. We persuade him that the immortal spirit is the only effective cause in the universe; that illness can be neither cause nor effect. The man who refuses to believe that pleasure and pain have a real existence

and understands that the spirit is omnipotent, fights down illness. We distract the attention of the imaginary invalid from his body and direct it to God. We purify the mind of the breath of the serpent; hatred, sensuality, vanity, and all the passions . . . because from that breath spring those horrible phantasms of the mortal spirit which we call fevers, cancers, ulcers, and deformities. . . ." She paused; then, raising the book which she had in her lap, added: "Here 's the best of medicines for me. I have here the lectures which Svamo Vivekananda, the Vedantist missionary,[1] gave in America a few years ago. When any one belonging to me succumbs to the mortal illusion of illness, I read him a page or two. It is as powerful as the Bible and as Mrs. Eddy's book."

"Could Vedanta philosophy set a broken leg also?" I could not help asking, rather brutally.

But an Anglo-Saxon puritan cannot understand irony or derision. After making sure, by a direct question,

[1] Vedanta philosophy is a system of Indian philosophy, first set forth in a work called the *Vedanta*, which professed to be founded on the Vedas. The Vedantists maintain that the phenomenal world, with its successions of change, and its plurality of souls, is due to an illusion (Maya) projected by God, the sole real existence. The whole world of individuality, including death, is a sphere of Maya. In virtue of its universal character, Maya may be regarded as the material cause of the world. Svamo Vivekananda is one of the leaders in the current revival of Vedanta philosophy, which is represented by a monthly organ entitled the *Brahmavedin*. A concise account of Vedanta philosophy is given in Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, under the heading "Oriental Philosophy."

Ataraxy, from the Greek ἀταραξία, is synonymous with Ecstasy, used by Plotinus to describe the idea of mystical union with the utterly transcendental One. It expresses the state of rapture in which the body is supposed to become incapable of sensation, while the soul is engaged in the contemplation of divine things. R. Vaughan, *Mystics*, says, "Ecstasy . . . is the liberation of your mind from its finite consciousness."

that I was asking her whether Christian Science could perform surgical operations, she answered quite calmly:

"Yes. The founder of Christian Science was successful with mental surgery also. But for this an extraordinary power of thought, and an incomparable purity of soul are required, and but few have got them. For this reason our sainted founder has allowed her faithful followers to employ surgeons for such complaints." She paused a minute, then said: "Do you wish really to study our doctrine? . . . I can lend you the book, announced by the angel in the Apocalypse, Mrs. Eddy's book, the greatest book which has been written since the Bible."

She rose and went out.

"She 's as mad as a hatter!" I said, in joke, as soon as she had gone out.

But Cavalcanti paused a moment in thought, then said:

"And yet there is a certain grandeur and nobility of thought in it——"

"My dear Cavalcanti!" I cried, interrupting him, "if you go on with your craze for tasting, touching, and prying into everything, I don't know what you won't end by admiring."

At this moment the Señora came in with the book announced by the angel. She handed it to Cavalcanti, and a copy of Vivekananda as well, saying that she had two of the latter. While Cavalcanti turned over the leaves of the books, I assumed his rôle of diplomatist, with a view to reaching some conclusion with the Señora. A discussion began between us, at the end of which the Señora declared herself ready to admit the doctor to the cabin, on condition that he did not

address any questions to the invalid about his ailment; for such questions would revive in the so-called invalid the false idea of illness. If he had any questions to ask, he could ask them of her, outside the cabin. I said I would communicate these terms to the doctor, and hoped he would accept them.

We returned to the dining-room. The tables had been cleared, and round them we found Rosetti, the doctor, the Admiral, and my wife, chatting and eating their Sunday ices. Picture the doctor!

"*Cose da pazzissimi*," he fumed, using the superlative for the first time since I had known him. "The Señora need not be afraid. I'll visit her invalid without opening my mouth, as if I were a veterinary surgeon. It makes me really feel like one."

Cavalcanti went with him as interpreter. We laughed a little at his explosion, and joked for a while about Christian Science and Mrs. Eddy's mental surgery. At last turning to Alverighi, who had not said a word up till now, I said rather caustically:

"You do get some beauties in America, and no mistake!"

"A few ignorant lunatics!" muttered Alverighi, shrugging his shoulders. "Who takes them seriously?"

"As to that, don't go too quick!" I answered. "Christian Science has a great many proselytes, even among the upper and wealthy classes. At Boston they have built a great church, not much smaller than Saint Peter's, I should say. It has an immense hall, with marble walls illustrated with the sayings of Jesus Christ and Mrs. Eddy, side by side!"

Alverighi shrugged his shoulders.

"The country is such a large one, and there are such a lot of people in it. And they all want to think with

their own brains, even those who have not got any."

"The effects of liberty," said the Admiral.

"An inconvenience inseparable from it," corrected Alverighi. He paused a moment as if hesitating; then added: "Besides, it 's easy to laugh."

"But what ought we to do?" I asked sarcastically. "Turn Christian Scientists? Seek a remedy in the Apocalypse?"

"I don't say that," answered Alverighi rather curtly; "I say that when a man falls ill, if he does not die he gets well; and then medicine claims the credit. The same thing happens with Mrs. Eddy's disciples. Those who are well are persuaded that they have to thank the tenets they hold for being so. Those who are ill do not doubt but that Christian Science will make them well again. Those who are dead are not in time to try to see if scientific medicine would have been more successful."

At this we all, except Rosetti, broke out. In his anxiety to justify the maddest madnesses of America, Alverighi was going so far as to defend the sacred medicine of the savages and of the ancients, which had come to life again in the new world. But our protests only caused Alverighi to fire up.

"We must not forget," he cried, "that America is the country of liberty. If there are people in America who would rather entrust their safety to God than to medicine . . . let them please themselves. Do you think that will spell the end of the world? What do you think, Rosetti?"

Alverighi appealed to Rosetti, probably because the latter's silence led him to suppose that he was more in agreement with him than with us. But Rosetti did

not answer at once. He looked at him for a moment, with a half-joking, half-mocking air, and then said:

"I think that man is a curious creature. . . . After a new hare every day; he 's never tired of starting them!"

He paused. We too paused for a moment, looking at him. No one had understood this vague allusion. Cavalcanti incited him to explain it with a concise "You mean——?"

"Man supposed at one time," replied Rosetti, "that God had nothing better to do than to nurse the human race. Now he has got it into his head that it is the duty of science to cure his ailments. Why and how, I confess I don't understand."

Again we all paused, somewhat surprised. Finding that no one else intended to speak, the Admiral said:

"I don't think it's very difficult to see why. Science studies the human body, discovers the laws which govern life, and also the means of combating illness and of postponing death."

Rosetti looked at him, and said:

"You believe then that nature obeys what we call its laws, and that the laws of nature exist? But of course, I was forgetting; we have already discussed that. You are a Comtist. You believe that science is true."

"I confess that I have always had that vulgar prejudice. Since it seems to be the case——"

"Precisely," replied Rosetti. "And I will prove it to you. What does a scientist do when he is searching for the so-called law or explanation of a natural phenomenon? He simplifies and arranges as far as possible. *Cæteris paribus* he will choose the simpler of the two explanations. But why need the simpler ex-

planation be the true one? If you look around, will you conclude that reality is simple, or that it is always anxious to simplify itself to please you? The law requires the phenomena of nature to be constant and uniform; but nature, on the contrary, is never either constant or uniform. Rather might it be said, and it has actually been said, that nature never does obey what we call her own laws, but rather always breaks them. Is there one single phenomenon which a law exactly fits? The scientists themselves recognise that there is not. Then——"

"But you 're reversing the world!" cried the Admiral rather impatiently, while I thought to myself that Rosetti really was applying his "reversible" idea rather freely.

"Not at all," replied Rosetti quietly. "I'm giving you the latest truths discovered by modern philosophy. Have n't you read an article published many years ago by Le Roy in the *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale?* Read it and you will see that nature is not, as you said, a great ordered arrangement. That 's where you go wrong. Nature is an eternally mobile chaos of images which go, come, return, superimpose themselves, transfuse themselves insensibly one into the other, mix, disappear, reappear, without ever interrupting their infinite continuity which fills eternity. Then comes science, armed with a great pair of forceps, hunts the images down in their mobile and dense continuity, cuts nature into little pieces, fixes her, thins her out, discriminates, isolates, simplifies, and above all orders the phenomena which in nature riot in a marvellous disorder. It is clear then that science not only does not reveal reality to us, but actually hides it from us by depicting it as simple and

ordered. For that marvellous order which you admire in the universe is not in the universe, but in our apprehension. Science then only depicts a false image of it. We have made science the factotum of our times, as our forefathers made of God the factotum of theirs. To science we entrust every task, expecting her to cure illnesses, to educate the young, to win battles, to enrich nations, to write history, to prove that Romulus never existed, to govern states, to fly, to swim under water, to photograph what cannot be seen, to explain, subdue, and falsify nature, to cultivate lands, and even to make revolutions. Is there not even a scientific socialism? But these are all mere caprices and fictions of our times. Nature does not lend herself by any means always and with equal condescension to all our caprices. Bergson is right. Science has for its true and proper province inanimate nature, not living nature, which does not allow herself without resistance to be either simplified or muzzled by our laws."

The Admiral hesitated, trying to find his bearings, then said:

"Why then, if simplicity and order do not exist in nature, are we determined at all costs to introduce them into it?"

"Because it suits our convenience," answered Rosetti. "By simplifying nature, we save our brains, which are inclined to be lazy, trouble. By making its varieties uniform and by fixing its mobility, we put on as it were blinkers which prevent us from seeing its great disorder—that disorder which, if we saw it as it is, would discourage us from our intention to master it."

"But in that case," replied the Admiral with some emotion, "truth is nothing but an illusion. We shall

call that true which it suits our convenience so to call; and with a change in our interest would come a change in truth also."

"Certainly."

"It 's impossible," exclaimed the Admiral vehemently. "It 's absurd. It 's——"

But at this point Rosetti, suddenly changing his tone, laughed and said:

"Cheer up, Admiral, don't worry yourself. What I am telling you is only apparently a paradox. Think for one minute. Do you think it reasonable that nature should have invented her eternal and immutable laws and should then have hidden them carefully away, so that man and science might have a game of hide-and-seek with her? Remember that the other day—no, you can't remember, as you were not present, but we told you about it—Signor Alverighi, Signor Ferrero, and your humble servant, after a long discussion, came to the conclusion that interest is the secret motive of all our artistic admiration. We judge that to be beautiful which it is useful for us so to judge. Very well then; interest is the reason of the true also. The scientific laws—it is not I who say this, but a greater authority than I, pragmatism, which is the true American philosophy,—the scientific laws are in our thought and not in nature. They do not exist outside us and they did not exist before us, but we ourselves invent them for the purpose of exploiting, not of understanding or explaining nature, which does not trouble us at all. In short, they are active instruments, ideal machines, I might say, and they serve actually to construct those machines of wood and iron which Signora Ferrero dislikes so much. Don't tell me, then, that a scientific law is true, because in it-

self it is more likely to be false. It is true when it is useful, because it is of service to us. It is interest, then, which makes science true to us, just as interest makes a work of art beautiful to us. Science is instrumental, says Bergson, and he is quite right; therefore the more faithfully a science serves us, the truer it is. Consequently medicine can only be called science by courtesy and concession; in reality it is only a half-science. There are in nature certain substances which possess the strange and mysterious virtue of altering in some way the state of one or the other of our organs. Alcohol intoxicates. Hemlock and strychnine kill. Chloroform and morphia put to sleep. Quinine allays fever. Digitalis stimulates the heart. Mercury . . . You all know what mercury does. Very well. Substances do exist, then, which can help us in our ailments. But how many are the cases in which the doctor can say to the invalid without hesitation and without any saving clause: "Swallow this, and you 'll be cured"?

But the Admiral would not surrender.

"No, no," he replied stubbornly, "there is no proportion between the services which a science can render us and the sum of certain truths which it contains. Medicine renders us great services; and yet it is an uncertain and unsafe science, because the phenomena it has to study are too obscure and complex. Astronomy is a more or less useless science, in practice: and yet how much more certain it is in its dicta than medicine! You will not deny that it is a science, and a true science too, for all that it does not help us to make money."

"Do you believe then, that the world actually does revolve round the sun?" asked Rosetti suddenly.

We were all dumfounded at this sally.

"What do you mean?" almost shouted the Admiral. "Is n't the Copernican system any longer true? Since when has that been the case, pray?"

"The Copernican system never has been true," replied Rosetti with such a frank air that even I, if I had not known him for some time, should have thought that he was speaking seriously. "When we say 'the world revolves' . . . But this time too it is not I who speak, but a great mathematician, Poincaré, in my stead. Very well then; when we say the earth revolves, we mean to say only that it is more convenient for us to suppose that the earth revolves and the sun stands still, for we cannot know whether either one or the other really revolves. The reason why we cannot know this is that we cannot conceive absolute space. Think for a moment, and you 'll be convinced. . . . When from the top of a bell-tower I watch a man crossing the square, I can say that the man is moving, because I know for certain that the bell-tower, and the spectator on it, are fixed. But the universe, when I contemplate it from the observatory of my thoughts, is too widespreading a square; and where am I to find in it the absolutely immovable bell-tower up which to climb—some point to which to refer the motion of the earth, and which I cannot suppose to be itself moving round the earth? And then? Then, after Poincaré, comes the Sorbonne and announces, through Tannery's mouth, to the big babies his contemporaries that the Copernican and the Ptolemaic systems are neither true nor false, either of them, inasmuch as we can refer the movement of the stars to the earth quite as well as to the sun, and we can make the sun revolve round the earth or *vice versa*, without their respective positions changing; and it is just the irrespective positions that we can know.

One can therefore upset one of the two systems into the other at pleasure. . . . Upset or reverse. Do you know, Alverighi, when you set to work to upset the universal verdict on *Hamlet*, why I at once grasped your idea? Because I had already pondered on the ease with which the universe of Aristotle might be upset into that of Copernicus."

"*Hamlet* and the system of the world are in the same boat!" I thought.

He paused. The Admiral had lost his bearings so completely that for a moment he did not utter a word. Then he said:

"I 'm dumfounded! If then the two systems are reversible, why has every one for so many centuries believed that one was true and the other false? Why has it cost us so much toil to effectuate the 'reversal'? Why are there not to-day Ptolemaic astronomers and Copernican astronomers, as there are materialists and spiritualists, classicists and romanticists?"

Rosetti rose, and said:

"Come with me on deck, and I will explain it to you, while I smoke a cigar. One must n't smoke here."

We all rose, and were about to follow them, when Cavalcanti and the doctor appeared.

"I 've played the vet. nobly," said the doctor. "He 's got inflammation of the lungs, but not badly. His heart is sound, and he 'll pull through all right."

"And Christian Science will inscribe one more triumph in her golden book," replied Rosetti with a smile.

CHAPTER VI

THE night was fresh with the soft damp of autumn. We began to pace the deck in silence with Rosetti in the middle. He had lighted his cigar, and seemed to wish to enjoy its first whiffs in silent thought. I had not seen him in such good form for some years, though I had not quite understood at what target the subtle shafts of irony in his long speech had been aimed.

"You of course know, Admiral," he said, "that there were several philosophers and astronomers of olden times who affirmed and endeavoured to prove that the earth revolves round the sun. Even Copernicus had no few forerunners: the Pythagoreans, Aristarchus of Samos, Seleucus of Seleucia. . . . How then did it come about that the ancients were, almost to a man, blind to so transparent a truth, and that among the blind were men no less distinguished than Aristotle and Hipparchus—Hipparchus himself, the greatest astronomer of olden times? . . . Interest was the reason, in this way. The supposition that the earth moves in space necessarily involves the further supposition that the fixed stars, all those countless little flames you see up there, are placed at a distance which is so great as to be practically infinite. Otherwise, how can we explain the fact that they have no annual parallax, or, to put it more simply, that no variation in their apparent situation can be discerned? In other words, to es-

tablish the movement of the earth, you must suppose it launched and lost in the infinite, an imperceptible grain in the midst of a frenzied dance of millions of similar worlds. You must imagine space spread round it right up to the confines of the infinite. But the ancient philosophers and astronomers had not the courage to adopt this view; for in the infinite which it postulates, religion also would have been volatilised, and, with religion, art, morality, and the ancient state, which were all based on religion. The gods of Olympus could watch over the earth from on high, but only on one condition, namely, that it stood firm beneath their eyes in the centre of an enclosed and delimited universe, and did not go running away into the infinite and losing itself amongst the swarms of innumerable stars. In short, ancient polytheism demanded a geocentric system of the universe. Therefore the ancients preferred the Ptolemaic system, involved though it was and hopelessly obscure to ordinary mortals, and the reason for their preference was an interest; for with that system the gods could more easily act as policeman of our vices. But little by little the world realised that it could dismiss its celestial police. Besides, Christian monotheism—here you have a profound thought of August Comte's, Admiral—had already begun to volatilise divinity. So the world began to demand an easier, more convenient, and less laboured explanation of the universe, and Copernicus appeared to reform the architecture of the universe. And what did the worthy Copernicus do? He considerably enlarged the universe, and in this enlarged universe he clamped down the sun, made the earth revolve round it, and sketched out the movements of the stars and their relations to each other, in a way which was much

more simple than the Ptolemaic system,—much more simple, but, mind you, not more true. And that 's why Copernicus triumphed: because man is the champion Work-shy in creation."

"But the simplicity lies in the phenomenon, not in our heads, much less in the head of the great Copernicus," retorted the Admiral stubbornly. "It is because the phenomenon is simple that we understand it."

"No," replied Rosetti. "We understand it easily, because it is we who have simplified it. So true is that, that we can, if we like, give a more complicated explanation of it, the Ptolemaic——"

"But the Ptolemaic theory is false," said the Admiral.

"Perhaps . . . if one supposed the world to be infinite. But if, like the ancients, you want to enclose and limit the universe, it is the only possible and true theory, because it is the only one which explains the apparent immobility of the stars."

"But the world is infinite, or I 'll eat my hat," replied the Admiral decidedly.

"How do you know that? Far from proving that the infinite exists, we cannot even imagine it."

He stopped, went to the side, and turning his face towards the right, raised his arm towards the sky and its twinkling myriads of stars.

"What is there up there, in those tracts of eternal night? Who has lighted those mysterious fires? What is their distance from us? Is it our eyes alone that peer through the night and dog the stars in their wanderings at an incalculable distance from us, or are there eyes posted in every corner of the universe whose gaze meets ours in the spaces of the night? How many million generations would be necessary, supposing we could travel over a calm sea in a ship like this, to reach

one of those stars? And when we had planted our feet on some planet which revolves round that sun of ours, on how many worlds now invisible to us, as far removed from that sun as it is from us, should we be able to fix our gaze? Is each one of those points in the infinite, then, itself the centre of an infinite sphere?"

He paused a moment, continued his walk, followed by us, and went on:

"The mind is appalled and numbed by thoughts like these. . . . It is useless for us to try to span with our narrow range of thought the immense spaces of the universe which surround us. . . . If it is impossible to conceive an enclosed and limited universe like Aristotle's, because the question inevitably follows, What is beyond it? so is it impossible to conceive an infinite universe, a beyond which is inexhaustible. We are, as it were, attached to a little corner of an incomprehensible space, and we suppose that the infinite exists without being able either to imagine it or to understand it or to prove it, only because it helps us to explain more simply the movements of the planets and the immobility of the stars."

"I understand," interrupted the Admiral dolefully. "After art, it is the turn of science. Science is false, and therefore progress is a mystification. You can't get out of it. August Comte is quite right. The idea of progress is the offspring of the first triumphs of science born between the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. Therefore, either progress is an increase of knowledge or it is an illusion."

"As a matter of fact," replied Rosetti, "it is an illusion; a reversible illusion, as I said the other evening. If science is instrumental, as Bergson says, and helps

us to exploit nature and to construct machines, the conclusion is clear: the men and the nations who have no need of machines, because they do not desire to make money in a hurry, disinterest themselves from or never take any interest in science. For them, for the Moslems for example, science, far from being the glory and mainspring of the world, the most potent sign of progress, can be but an aberration of our petty pride."

We had now wandered back to the discussion of progress, which had been begun four days before and had been interrupted by the storm. Alverighi, hearing progress mentioned, once more plunged into the discussion.

"But we are not Moslems, thank heaven!" he cried.

"Quite true," answered Rosetti. "But suppose we became Moslems? Don't look at me like that! . . . I mean to say: Suppose we came one day to consider simplicity and resignation as the greatest virtues in life?"

"But that can never happen!" replied Alverighi curtly.

"Why not?" answered Rosetti. "Did we not decide the other day that man may have need of everything, but that nothing is necessary to him? That there is no criterion enabling us to decide, among human needs, which are legitimate and which vicious, which obligatory and which optional? That therefore the Moslem's hatred of machines is as justifiable as the American's adoration of them? The mad desire to become rich, to rush about and to cover the ground—the intense life, as Roosevelt calls it—is more beautiful than the simple life to you, Alverighi, and to all who are possessed like you. . . . But how about an Epicurean philosopher, a Virgilian shepherd, or a monk of the middle ages?"

"But the Epicurean philosophers and the monks of the middle ages are dead, and the Virgilian shepherds never existed," interrupted Alverighi. "Do you think it possible that man some day, in the course of centuries, may mislay the treasures of science or forget the art of constructing his marvellous machines? That a second performance of the tragedy of the Roman Empire may be given, not this time in the tiny Mediterranean, but on the two shores of the Atlantic? In that case the world would have to relapse into barbarism."

"As if it ever could!" answered Rosetti with a smile. "Do you suppose, Ferrero, for instance, that, even in what seem to us to have been the blackest days in the history of the Roman Empire, there was any general consciousness that the Empire was decaying? The answer is of course No. And why? Because what seems to us a great catastrophe, though it harmed some, benefited others. Because to the old order of things succeeded a new, which gave or promised to many either bread or office or power or peace or pardon for sins or paradise. You can call the age the iron age, if you like; but you must do so from your own point of view, not from that of its contemporaries. For instance, I do not know to what extent those artists of the late Empire to whom Signor Cavalcanti alluded the other day were conscious of inferiority to their fellows of the first and second centuries. At all events you may be quite sure, Alverighi, that they did not cry their eyes out because there were no longer artists of sufficient merit to compete with themselves; that they were at no loss for arguments to prove that all was right with the world. For the rest, when you discuss progress, always remember Leo's little toe! Leo has

taught us how to prove that the world is all right, even when it 's going headlong down hill. By a simple reversal it can be proved that the sandals are perfect, and that it is the foot which is at fault. For instance, literary culture has been decadent in the last century. But ask any journalist, whom this same decadence enables to turn the enormities of his pen into money, what he thinks about it, and he will prove to you that it is sheer, genuine progress. And what about machines? Has not machinery ruined all manual industries, beginning with the Indian cotton industry, as Signora Ferrero has told us? A huge calamity for all those who lived by them, but a marvellous progress for the founders of the new industries. The other evening you said that a refined civilisation was an imposture; but to a goldsmith or to a dressmaker of the Rue de la Paix you may be sure that this imposture is the only true civilisation. We contemplate our great liners with pride. But the other day an old sailor with whom I was chatting on the poop said to me, shrugging his shoulders: 'It 's an easy job navigating these iron carcasses in the open sea. Navigating sailing ships in narrow seas as we used to do when I was twenty—that 's what used to make a man a sailor!' The more perfect the instrument, the less brain is required of the operator.

Progress then makes men stupid. Everything decays in the world, thanks to progress, and everything progresses by decaying. Why? Because when we assert the progress or the decadence of a certain thing we mean to say that certain changes in it are good or are bad; but the Good and the Bad are a strange couple, just like the Beautiful and the Ugly. They are enemies, yet always go together: they are opposed to each other, yet are always exchanging masks and rôles. So

how is one to distinguish them? Man pursues the Good, and at last grasps it or thinks he has grasped it. Alas! the mask has deceived him; it was the Bad! He flies in despair from the Bad, runs till he loses his breath, and falls exhausted into the arms of the—Good! Consider all the opposites: Authority and Liberty, War and Peace, Riches and Poverty, Victory and Defeat, Knowledge and Ignorance, Luxury and Simplicity, Strength and Weakness, the intense Life and the quiet Life; and then say with one voice, if you can, which is the Good and which the Bad. One man will judge one set of these opposites to be the Good, or progress, or civilisation—these three are synonymous—another man the other set; and what will be the motive underlying the opinion of each? Search well, and you will find that it is interest! Again interest, interest always and everywhere, exactly as in art and in science; interest, that vast term which embraces innate inclination, needs natural and acquired, religion, personal fortune, fatherland, state, the social order to which a man belongs, points of honour, the very illusions of ambition, of desire, and of hope.

So man has the two categories of Good, Progress, and Civilisation, and Bad, Decadence, and Barbarism. And according as this or that interest is in the ascendant, this or that illusion or ambition or aspiration has the greater force, he chooses in which of these categories to insert Liberty and Authority, Riches and Poverty, Wisdom and Ignorance, Luxury and Simplicity, the intense Life and the quiet Life. You do not believe, Alverighi, that we can ever become Moslem. Why not? Times in which boldness, audacity, and diligence win the day, because the power is in the hands of small and energetic oligarchies, are always followed by times in which the

drab masses dictate the laws and impose their own virtues or defects, call them which you will: simplicity, resignation, the moderation of desires, and of possessions. Man is like the horse shut up in the revolving wheel. He tramps along, he sweats, he pants, he drudges, he thinks he is climbing and ascending, and all the time he is just where he was when he started; and the long road he has traversed, and the difficult ascent and the precipitous descents, were all only a dream and an illusion. . . . What we call progress is but this illusion."

"Life, then," interrupted the Admiral brusquely, "can be nothing but one immense hallucination caused by our interests, that is to say, by our passions."

"This is," replied Rosetti, "the general conclusion at which nearly all the more recent philosophies arrive."

He thought a moment, then drew out his watch, and said:

"It 's only a few minutes short of midnight. What do you say to continuing to-morrow?"

"He 's mad," declared Alverighi sharply and concisely, directly Rosetti had gone.

The Admiral and Cavalcanti said nothing, nor did I at first. Rosetti was a free-thinker, with a leaning towards positivism, like so many scientists of the older generation. I had thought at first that he was talking ironically, as he was fond of doing. But his reasoning had not lacked pith and vigour, and I had not seen him for six months. Could he too, like so many others, have been converted in that space of time to the philosophy which is to-day so much in vogue? We walked up and down for a while in silence. At last I said that Rosetti was joking.

"Whether he is speaking seriously or in joke," said Alverighi, "I will never admit that men will consent to be poorer when they can be richer. Can you picture to yourselves a St. Francis come to life again? He 'd end in a prison or a lunatic asylum."

"I, on the contrary, think," objected Cavalcanti, "that it would not suit Reason ill if she humiliated herself a little every now and then and did penance, together with all the Lusts and Vanities of the modern world. There is some good stuff in Rosetti's ideas. . . . But what worries me is the theory of interest. . . . Beauty interested? Truth interested? I always hark back to this idea; I cannot convince myself altogether of its truth, yet I do not know how to confute it. It 's an enigma which I cannot decipher."

"And the funny part of it is," I added, "that these theories have been formulated by the most disinterested of men."

CHAPTER VII

ON Monday morning, at eight o'clock, I took a turn on the two decks; on the starboard side of the upper one I found the Admiral, Cavalcanti, and Alverighi, seated in a circle discussing the previous evening's debate.

"But can any one suppose," Alverighi was saying, "that the day will come when people will persuade themselves again to travel on foot, in coaches, on horseback, or in sailing ships, or to live the simple life? Nonsense, the very idea is ridiculous."

"Why?" answered Cavalcanti thoughtfully. "Why should not man have the right to choose between riches and poverty, luxury and asceticism, perpetual motion and repose, just as he has the right to choose between romanticism and classicism, spiritualism and materialism!"

"But do you realise," replied Alverighi, "what would happen the day that people refused any longer to rush about, work, and enjoy themselves breathlessly as they do now? The factories would close their doors, the cities would empty themselves, the fields would be left untilled and lose their value, the ships would rust in the harbours, the banks——"

Cavalcanti shrugged his shoulders.

"And suppose," he interrupted, "men persuaded themselves some day that they would be happier——"

"If the world went bankrupt?" replied Alverighi, excitedly.

But before Cavalcanti had time to answer, the Admiral interposed:

"So disastrous a supposition apart, I too am convinced that men nowadays are too extravagant and casual. What need is there, for instance, to rush wildly about the world, as we do? I cannot see how the man who rushes about for the sake of rushing about is any wiser than the man who stays still for the sake of not moving. But it 's what Rosetti says about science that beats me. Does he mean to say that the sublime law of progress is merely a fiction we have invented?—we, who three or four thousand years ago were a lot of ignorant slaves trembling before the might of the genii and gods with which our imagination had peopled nature! Is the sky then but a great marionette-theatre in which the planets dance for the amusement of us great babies?"

At this point Cavalcanti told us, smiling, that, the evening before, he had retired to his cabin with his brain full of what Rosetti had said, and before going to sleep had taken up the book by the Indian philosopher which Señora Yriondo had lent him. He had read this, page after page, right through the night, and it had seemed to him like a soft invisible voice high above his head, carrying Rosetti's reasonings on to a definite conclusion. What was the conclusion to be drawn from all the discussions we had had about beauty, truth, progress, civilisation, and barbarism, not one of which we had agreed in defining? That each individual "ego" is the measure of the Universe; that the world is not as we see it, and that we do not see it as it is, but every one sees it as his fancy prompts him. This is

the fundamental principle of Vedantism, which does not shirk the consequences of this principle, but boldly affirms that every one is right and every one is wrong. Everything is both large and small, good and bad, beautiful and ugly. Every truth is false and every falsehood true. Vice and virtue, guilt and innocence, honour and infamy, light and darkness, riches and poverty, life and death, that infinite variety of the world on which our eyes appear to dwell, are but an illusion and a mirage. And man succeeds finally in unmasking the cruel imposture and eluding the subtle snare of this variety, after a thousand toils and perils, when he comprehends that, as the waves subside continually into the unbroken whole of the ocean, so the eternal variety of the world is absorbed in the eternal immobility of the universe, uniform in all its parts and in all its members, and consequently immortal, serene, immune from grief, death, or passion; a lake of eternal happiness, a sea of infinite calm, a unity pure, formless, changeless, and therefore perfect.

Cavalcanti's views were couched in choice language and expressed with vigour. But Alverighi met them with a mocking sneer which bordered on impertinence, saying:

"Moral: one halfpenny and a million are worth the same! Any difference between them is an illusion."

"They are worth the same, according to Vivekananda," answered Cavalcanti without losing his composure, "to the wise man who possesses supreme wisdom."

"I 'd rather possess a hundred acres of rich land in the Pampas," retorted the other.

"But perhaps that 's what Signor Rosetti thinks too!" I said. "A man who is so active, so much opposed

to all mysticism, such a hater of all the philosophies of inaction and resignation! But there—I 'm absolutely convinced that Rosetti, when he expresses these opinions, is speaking ironically for some reason or other, to set us by the ears. If you 'll repeat those ideas of yours to him, that will be one way of forcing him to drop his irony and to reason seriously. I guarantee that he will not be in a hurry to pass for a Vedantist."

But the first luncheon-bell scattered us. At luncheon Rosetti did not appear. Consequently we could not get him with his back to the wall. When we got up and left the table, I went to the chart, and found that we had reached 23° 36′ lat. and 17° 30′ long. I then retired for the siesta, with my mind full of Cavalcanti and Vivekananda. It did not in the least surprise me that the diplomat, native of that new India, equatorial Brazil, should have been inflamed by a sudden mystical fervour before the Eternal Immobility of the Whole which the wise men of ancient India had contemplated under the tropical sun. Cavalcanti was an unconscious mystic, nourished on Western ideas which were alien to his nature. But I could not help thinking at the same time how confused and topsy-turvy the world now is, with so many ideas and so many nations wandering unceasingly over the surface of the earth!

That afternoon after the siesta, I went back on deck, where I met Mrs. Feldmann. She was calm, and began of her own accord to discuss her husband. She told me that he had always been very jealous, not so much from love as from a sort of exaggerated instinct of proprietorship.

"He 's got all the instincts of a monopolist; when he wants a thing, he wants it all to himself. I was just one of his possessions."

She told me that the Admiral had reported to her that I had told him too that I did not believe the report of the divorce to be true. I told her that that was my opinion, and I repeated:

"At least, unless there 's another woman in the case!"

"Oh, I 'm quite positive there is n't," she answered with a sly smile, which at once struck me as strange.

Half-way along the deck we met Vazquez, who saluted her and said with a sigh:

"If it had been the *Mafalda*, we should be reaching Genoa, not the Canaries, to-morrow. I was a real ass to take this boat. But Alverighi would have it."

After a short talk we separated. Then Cavalcanti read me a few extracts from Vivekananda. Alverighi passed quickly by and said with a laugh:

"Are you contemplating the Immobility of the Whole?"

Cavalcanti told me that he had at last found out that all the tales about Mrs. Feldmann and her riches had been circulated by Lisetta, the maid. He had caught her, a short while before, recounting to the fair Genoese and the São Paulo doctor's wife, as a great secret, how her mistress had a bath of solid gold, in which she daily bathed her fair limbs in waters mixed with five hundred francs' worth of precious scents of one sort or another, and how at the end of every voyage she used to give a big dinner-party and costly presents to all the passengers.

The morning's interrupted discussion was revived towards the end of dinner. Signor Rosetti was present. I told him, half in jest, that Cavalcanti had made him out to be a Vedantist, a disciple of the philosophy of contemplative inaction. Cavalcanti repeated what

he had said, with a few malicious exaggerations thrown in. We awaited Rosetti's protests and objections. Instead, he said with his ironical smile:

"Of course I am a Vedantist. So are our times and the civilisation of machinery Vedantist, without being aware of it. And we are all more or less consciously Vedantists, and you more than any one, Alverighi."

"I?" cried Alverighi with a stare of incredulity.

"To be sure, you," answered Rosetti at once, without leaving any one time to recover from his surprise. "Did not you yourself argue that each individual man is the infallible and self-contained measure of the Beautiful and the Ugly? that he ought to defend this quasi-divine right of his with all his might? Though why should we not go further and ask ourselves: Why the Beautiful and the Ugly only, and not the True and the False, the Good and the Evil as well? As a matter of fact we have followed in your footsteps and thrown light upon all the criteria which help us to judge the qualities of things—to determine not only whether they are beautiful or ugly, but also whether they are real or false, good or bad, and so to judge progress and decadence, civilisation and barbarism, which is only another way of saying whether certain changes are good or bad. And we have discovered that all these criteria are personal, reversible, and changeable, because they depend on our desires and our interests; and that not a single one is eternal, universal, and imperative. It follows that every man is the measure of the universe, as you said, Cavalcanti. Hence comes it, as it seems to me, that all the differences which we see in things, and which cause us to praise some as beautiful and scorn others as ugly, to describe these as good and those as

bad, to affirm that one thing is true and another false, are only apparent differences; for they depend on us and our states of mind, which, whether simple or complex, original or derived, are continually changing from hour to hour, as a river changes colour in its course. If then the differences between things are only apparent, the world always retains its identity. With what object, then, should we strain to arouse it from its sublime impassivity and to alter its unassailable identity? And what is the energy of the human race, which imagines it can reshape the universe not once but many times?—what are our machines, our science, our vaunted progress, and our longed-for riches, but the illusion of the horse which as it tramps on and turns the wheel, imagines it is scouring the world, though it is not advancing a step? Of course the miller is concerned that the horse should walk, even if he does not progress, and grind his grain; but the poor horse, if he could escape from the tyranny of the miller, would leave the wheel and seek peace and quiet in the field. Similarly the modern man tramps along in the wheel of progress, in which avarice, the mania for luxury, and the pride of reason, emboldened by a tiny success or two, have imprisoned him, and fancies that he is travelling towards a distant goal, while he is all the time in the same place. For that is all modern progress is. Have you read Georges Sorel's book, the *Illusions du Progrès?* I cannot understand why man should not step one day out of this infernal wheel. Have not the times of liberty arrived, as you yourself said? Did you not denounce with fiery eloquence the intellectual oligarchies of poor old Europe, which would fain make men the slaves of their ambition and greed, by pretending to the knowledge of the only model of per-

fect beauty and to the possession of the treasure of absolute truth? Have you not extolled the glorious revolt of modern man, who asserts his right to create for himself his own criterion and model of beauty, at the bidding of his inner consciousness, untroubled by outside influence? But what does it profit us to have escaped from under the yoke of those ancient oligarchies of philosophers, critics, æsthetes, jurists, professors, and theologians, if we fall into the hands of an oligarchy of bankers, makers of machinery, insatiable men of science and inventors, who aim at acquiring the Empire of the world by persuading men that they know what is true progress, and that they possess nothing less than the new philosopher's stone, the undiscoverable definition of the absolute Good? Liberty, Liberty! Man must acquire not only the right of enjoying beauty freely and without interference, but also the no less divine right of choosing for himself the wise and proper mode of life, free from the impositions of interests and of tyrannical oligarchies, in the open air outside the wheel of progress. And the very day on which man escapes from that infernal, mechanical, creaking wheel of progress, he will realise that it is an empty and fatal illusion to run for the sake of not standing still, to busy himself for the sake of not taking rest, to long for riches for the sake of not being poor. He will seek to disinterest himself not only from art, as you said, but from science, riches, and everything else; for there is no object in his disinteresting himself from one illusion, only to become entangled in another. He will take refuge in Nirvana, in Ataraxy, in Ecstasy.[1] The

[1] Nirvana is freedom from illusion, the "going out" of the three fires of lust, ill-will, and dulness; and, on its positive side, absorption into and identification with the blessed life of Brahman the Absolute.

civilisation of machinery, Signora Ferrero, will evaporate in a great Ecstasy."

Although a slight suggestion of irony was obvious in the speaker's tone, his reasoning was clear and incontrovertible. Even Alverighi seemed silenced for a minute, and, when he spoke at last, could only say:

"But think, Rosetti; just think! What a revolution that would be! The French Revolution would be nothing to it."

"Assuredly," replied Rosetti, without flinching. "Indeed, it would be the only real revolution. I laugh when I hear the socialists say that they want to undermine the power of capital with the doctrines of Karl Marx! The very men who proclaim it to be the first duty of the people to multiply their earnings, and their needs at the same time! The empire of capital will not fall to pieces until the day comes when the people look with horror at the luxuries, the extravagance, the pleasures, and the vices, which the upper classes instil into them, only to cast them in their teeth as soon as they have made what profit they can out of them."

"But it 's impossible, simply impossible," repeated Alverighi still more emphatically. "Can you imagine even for one moment that a man will be willing to remain poor when he might be rich? To earn half, when he might earn double?"

"Why not?" answered Rosetti. "Poverty was held by generations without number to be good and salutary; Christianity has actually sanctified it."

"A case of sour grapes!" said Alverighi. "In those days it was too difficult to make money! But now that America and machinery——"

"But to-day, too," remarked Rosetti, "the man who wants to earn much must work hard. And it is not

every one who finds this incessant mental fatigue to his liking. There are many who, if they could, would prefer to work less hard, at the expense of earning less."

"If they could," echoed Alverighi; "but they cannot."

"Because the others set the pace."

"Quite right too!"

"Right? But where 's your liberty, then? For liberty protests against the intellectual oligarchies of Europe, even if——"

"But," interrupted Alverighi, "the oligarchies which impose progress on the masses, benefit them, for they make them richer, whether they like it or not. The workpeople wished to break the machines at the start, and abused them up hill and down dale. And the machines have made the workman the king, or rather the tyrant, of the world."

"They would benefit them," answered Rosetti, "if to become rich were a good thing in itself. But, while it may be a good thing, it may also be a bad thing. It just depends how you look at it."

"But does it not seem to you reasonable, just, and natural that the bold and strong should set the pace to the weak and timid?"

"If one wants to acquire much riches in a short time, yes. If one wants to contemplate the eternal immobility of the universe, no."

"But if mankind had wasted all its time contemplating the immobility of the universe, the world would still be what it was a thousand years ago."

"Progress is but an illusion; remember Leo's little toe!" said Cavalcanti laughingly.

"But force, wisdom, power, riches——"

"Are all illusions!" repeated Cavalcanti; "even our

bodies are an illusion . . . of the mortal spirit, as Signora Yriondo puts it!"

"I see," said Alverighi. "Millions, houses, lands, railways, this ship, gold and silver,—all are illusions."

"They are illusions," interrupted Rosetti, "because they have no value for the man who has no need for them."

"You said so yourself," added Cavalcanti. "If a mystical movement spread throughout the masses, practically all our riches would vanish like smoke."

Alverighi paused a moment, with an angry look in his eyes; then, crossing his arms, leaned forward on the table, and, fixing his eyes on Cavalcanti and Rosetti alternately, said:

"I think we have talked enough for the present, so I will just tell you the conclusion I have come to. You and all the philosophers in the world may rack your brains as much as you like to prove that riches are a dream and an illusion. But men will continue to fly from misery in Europe, to riches in America. Both in Europe and in America they will continue to spend themselves from morning till night in the pursuit and capture of the vain illusion of riches. When they possess it, they will be happy; when they do not possess it, they will be desperate; and they will turn their backs on all the preachers of simplicity to-morrow as they do to-day, and as they did yesterday. Riches may or may not be an illusion; but, whether they be an illusion or a reality, the modern man is so made, that he does n't care a fig for art, pictures, morality, traditions, Nirvana, Ataraxy, and all the rest of it; money, on the other hand, gold, riches—that 's what he wants. He wants money, and that 's enough!"

He thumped the table with his fist, and rose from his

seat. Rosetti made as if to stop him, but he said curtly:

"No more arguments for me. I 've had enough. We are getting near Europe, and I must work at my report for the Paris bankers."

And he went quickly out.

We also went out in a few minutes, discussing this unexpected conclusion to our long talk.

"He 's really annoyed this time!" said Cavalcanti rather uneasily.

"He 's not altogether in the wrong," I said. "Our friend Rosetti here has swept away the whole world from before his eyes, like the pea from under the thimble. You won't make me believe, Rosetti, that you 're really a convert to Vedantism."

He smiled, but said nothing.

One by one we all scattered, most of us to write letters for the return post to America from Las Palmas next day. I again strolled up and down with Mrs. Feldmann, and told her the new rumours which were current about her, without telling her, however, that Lisetta was their originator. She laughed; then again discussed with me, quite calmly, the telegram which she expected to receive next day.

Even if you were divorced, I thought as I took leave of her, you would soon find another husband to console you.

After leaving her, I found the fair Genoese, the São Paulo doctor's wife, the jeweller, and the two wine-merchants, busy discussing her in the lobby of the dining-room. They were positively intoxicated by Lisetta's stories, and were expressing their emotions in rapturous eulogies.

"How nice she is!" the fair Genoese was saying.

"So affable and simple, without an atom of pride! The other day she met me carrying my little girl. She petted her, and actually tried to talk to her in Italian. She speaks it with difficulty and her accent is not good. I tried to answer in French, but I 'm no good at that; so I don't think she understood me, and I certainly did n't understand her. All the same it was very nice of her, was n't it?"

It struck me that the doctor's wife was rather cross that she could not say that the august lady had spoken to her, too, for she remarked maliciously:

"Whenever she sees a child she stops it and gives it sweets, even to third-class children."

"I wonder how much she will tip the stewards?" said the Genoese. "We shall make a poor show in comparison."

"A thousand francs, I 'll be bound," said the jeweller.

"Not more than that?" asked the fair Genoese, incredulously.

"How much more do you want her to give? A million," retorted the jeweller, somewhat annoyed at not having been lavish enough with Mrs. Feldmann's money.

"And she 'll leave a sum of money for the poor people in the third class, won't she?" remarked the São Paulo doctor's wife. "They say——"

"And what parting present shall I get?" asked the Genoese; then added with a sigh: "But it must be splendid to be a multi-millionairess! To be able to gratify every whim! What would you do, Signora, if you had all that money?"

I left them, thinking, not for the first time, that life is like a continual "crossing the line." But just as I

was going into my cabin I met Rosetti, who was also just about to turn in, and said to him laughingly:

"You amused yourself hugely at Alverighi's expense this evening. Rather too much, I 'm inclined to think."

He looked at me, smiled, and said:

"Remember, Ferrero, irony is a gift of God."

"True," I replied. "But with that divine weapon, what destruction you have wrought. You have destroyed everything. I am beginning to ask myself whether the world exists."

"Destroyed. Irony never destroys, so long as it is employed against the contradictions of thought. It only becomes that poisoned, diabolical weapon called cynicism, when it is employed against the contradictions of action. Remember always, man must be consistent in thought, but he can hardly ever be consistent in action. So do not be shocked when you see irony employed against the contradictions of thought; and take care that you, who are a man of thought and therefore enjoy the fair places and roses of life, never use irony against those whose lot are the brambles and thorns of existence; I mean, Action!"

PART III

CHAPTER I

NEXT morning, Tuesday, at seven o'clock, we were lying at anchor in the little harbour of Las Palmas, waiting for the doctor. Before us the ocean, so lately boundless, restless, and deserted, lay confined, stagnant, and full of craft. The *Cordova* appeared larger and higher above the surface of the sea by the side of the boats which were already buzzing round her, bringing cigars and oranges for the third-class passengers who were lolling over the side. The morning was a gloomy one, the sky grey and threatening, the hills surrounding Las Palmas black; and yet with what unwonted pleasure did we gaze at them! At length, after having contemplated for eleven days from the unstable deck the eternal and ever-fleeting mobility of the waves and clouds, the joy of being able to rest our eyes on the motionless outlines of mother earth, and of feeling a firm and solid floor beneath our feet!

Before half-past eight, the Admiral, Rosetti, Alverighi, Cavalcanti and Vazquez appeared. They were all, except the Admiral, in the shore-going rig, with hats and umbrellas.

"Aren't you going ashore, Admiral?" I asked him.

"Later on. I 'll join you at the Hôtel de France at luncheon-time. Mrs. Feldmann wants me to help

her read the letters she is expecting. We shall then go ashore together."

We talked about casual topics. Rosetti prophesied rain; but that did not frighten any one. The only thing that worried us was the waiting. When *would* that blessed sanitary authority come? Meanwhile the sailors were getting ready to coal ship. They were closing the doors and scuttles, stretching great tarpaulins over everything, and rigging ladders, ropes, and winches. At last a steam launch put off from the shore and made straight for the *Cordova*, followed by two or three others. A man in uniform came on board, with several others at his heels, shipping agents and coal-merchants, I suppose. Then there began on the accommodation ladder and on deck a polyglot hubbub of noisy chatter and questions, in the middle of which I heard some one cry: "The post! Here 's the post!" Suddenly Alverighi swooped down on me.

"Quick, quick! The captain says we may use Lloyd's agent's launch. But you must hurry up; it 's just off."

Hurrying through the noisy, busy crowd, I succeeded in finding my wife and son, but not Rosetti. I was proceeding to look for him, when Cavalcanti joined me:

"Come along; Signor Rosetti is already in the launch."

We were about to descend when the Admiral passed us, carrying a voluminous pile of letters.

"Mrs. Feldmann's letters," he said with a smile. "*Au revoir* at the Hôtel de France."

I followed Cavalcanti down the accommodation ladder.

The launch shoved off from the black side of the *Cordova* and drew rapidly away shoreward. What a

joy to feel once more the earth, firm and motionless, beneath our feet! Rejoicing like discharged prisoners, we hurried along the muddy street which leads to the picturesque town, followed by a guide talking, joking, and laughing. Alverighi alone was silent and gloomy, no doubt because of the defeat he had suffered the night before. He could not get over his failure to upset the doctrine that machinery dissolves in Ecstasy and that riches are not preferable to poverty!

We visited the Cathedral. There, in front of the high altar, while Cavalcanti and I were looking at it and the others were scattered about the church, he suddenly said to me:

"It must have been convenient, when men believed in God. In those days they knew what they ought to admire, hate, love, and despise; while now . . . No, life cannot be only a system of interests, as Rosetti maintains, if he does seriously maintain it; and Vedantism, universal detachment, can be nothing but a transitory expedient to mitigate the nausea of living solely for one's own profit, as men do nowadays. God must be born again, or, rather, have never died; only he will have to appear under his proper name, which is Life! Interests interpose themselves between us and Life like a mist; and in that mist Beauty, Truth, and Virtue seem to us illusions. But let us not be cheated by the mist. Let us hurl ourselves, like Faust, into Life. Let us live it in its thousand forms with fervour, sincerity, and freedom; and we shall attain the absolute, we shall handle the Real, we shall find God on every side . . . in a flower . . . in a spasm of love . . . in a Greek statue . . . in a scene of *Hamlet.*"

The guide came up and insisted on taking us to the court-house and showing us the elegant instrument

with which Spanish justice throttles condemned criminals, at the same time regaling us with details of the lives, deaths, and crimes of the most recent victims. As we were about to leave, a storm, or rather a regular waterspout, came down, and kept us there for half an hour. Afterwards we visited a few other churches, wandered about the town, and towards noon made our way to the Hôtel de France.

The Admiral had not arrived. We waited till half-past twelve.

"The rain must have frightened Mrs. Feldmann," said Rosetti.

We decided to begin luncheon. During the meal we discussed various topics, and cracked a few jokes at the expense of Vivekananda. We then took advantage of an improvement in the weather to take a long walk in the environs of Las Palmas and to visit several shops. At half-past four, we returned on board.

Poor *Cordova!* What a state she was in! As dusty and black as a coal pit. Luckily the bunkers were just full up, and the sailors were beginning to clean the decks as best they could. I left my wife busy with the lace-vendors who, like the cigar-sellers, had invaded the part of the ship which had already been cleaned. I made straight for my cabin, by the companion which led down from the upper deck; for the doors opening on to the main deck were closed. On my way I met Lisetta, who passed me almost at a run, with a serious face which betokened an unpleasant and urgent mission. As I was about to open my cabin door, I saw the doctor running up on to the upper deck. I entered my cabin, but, while changing my coat, heard the bell in the passage ring loud and often, and the stewardess call out in a tired and sulky voice:

"All right, I 'm coming."

What 's up? I asked myself.

Coming out, I met the stewardess, and asked if anyone was ill.

"Yes, the American lady," she answered.

That 's why the Admiral did not come ashore, I thought.

I guessed that something had happened. I joined my wife on deck, where the pedlars were packing up ready to go off, as it was time to weigh anchor. But strange and confused murmurs were flying about among the astonished and perplexed passengers. Some said that Mrs. Feldmann's husband was dead, others that his bank had failed.

I looked for the Admiral. The stewardess told me he was in Mrs. Feldmann's cabin. Meanwhile, the pedlars had gone. Several hundred boxes of bananas, consigned to Genoa, covered the forecastle. The bay was dotted with lights. Whistles and bells sounded. Slowly, the *Cordova* began to move, and turned her bows once more towards her distant goal. Gradually the lights of Las Palmas grew smaller and faded away, while I paced the deck and impatiently waited for the Admiral. At last he appeared when the first dinner bell rang, looking as if he had heard bad news.

"He 's going for a divorce," he said. "He 's going to marry some old servant of theirs, a housemaid or a governess or a nurse, I don't know exactly which . . . I could n't quite make out."

"Miss Robbins?" I cried.

"Exactly. How did you guess?"

I then told him what Mrs. Feldmann had confided to me about Miss Robbins. I had not alluded to her when I reported to him my talks with Mrs. Feldmann, as it

had not seemed to me worth while. He then told me quickly and concisely that several telegrams had come, including two very long ones from her lawyer. It seemed that the husband had already begun divorce proceedings; that he had been for several years Miss Robbins's lover, and had presented her in recent years with a house. He had now made up his mind to marry her. No one knew where he was. His uncle, who wanted to put in his oar on the wife's behalf, had not yet succeeded in unearthing him. Mrs. Feldmann had swooned at this terrible news. When she had come to she had raved, screamed, and wept despairingly for several hours. It was only a few minutes before he met me that, under the influence of soothing words and drugs, she had quieted down and gone off to sleep.

I was much distressed, and asked the Admiral what he thought about it, and how he explained it. He shrugged his shoulders, and answered:

"I can't make it out at all."

The second dinner bell rang. Dinner had hardly begun before some one alluded to the sinister rumours which were flying about. They gave such a garbled version of the facts that the Admiral felt himself obliged to correct them, and give the true version. He found, however, so much difficulty in explaining so strange a story, that I took it upon myself to repeat some of the episodes which Mrs. Feldmann had related to me on the day of the storm; then, warming to my subject, and egged on by the curiosity of my audience, I ended by summarising the whole history of the family, beginning with the "Great Continental" affair and its vicissitudes. I thought I should stagger my hearers by announcing that the Feldmanns possessed more than a hundred millions, but Alverighi only asked casually:

"Dollars?"

I replied that I thought it was francs, not dollars.

"That 's not a great deal," he answered, shrugging his shoulders.

We all laughed; but he said quite seriously:

"A hundred millions? A man who has gone to America with a capital of seven millions, and has married a rich wife into the bargain? Why, I hope to leave my children a hundred millions, and I landed in America with two thousand francs."

I was n't going to argue about it, so I went on with my story. I told them about the daily increasing disagreements, the "Great Continental" scandals, the daughter's marriage, the mother's confidence in Miss Robbins, the latter's base treachery, which the morning's telegram had laid bare. The others listened in silence and, when I had finished, paused as if perplexed and uncertain what to make of it all.

Even Alverighi did not speak at first; then, suddenly, and with one of his usual impetuous outbursts, he said resentfully:

"Now you can see the result of all your sermons about art, beauty, elegance, and refinement being the ultimate reason of Life! And yet you all fly at me when I preach that we must destroy the impious oligarchy which from Europe disseminates so false a doctrine throughout the world."

This remark struck us all as being somewhat beside the question, and Cavalcanti said as much:

"But what have art and the intellectual oligarchy of Europe got to do with the Feldmann family quarrels?"

"A great deal," answered Alverighi readily. "Why is it that those two, as soon as they had got a little money together, began to quarrel and are now going to

separate? To decide whether the Empire style is superior to that of Louis XV. or the Japanese; whether it is smarter to buy an old castle, or a yacht! Fancy such nonsense, in America of all places, where even the multi-millionaires . . . But who was it who told me that he did not believe a word of what the newspapers say about the luxury of millionaires? You, Ferrero, was n't it?"

I nodded. Here Cavalcanti broke in:

"Do you suppose that a couple get divorced like that, just over a question of æsthetics? I should prefer to say that the husband at a certain moment fell in love with another woman, and——"

"Certainly, gentlemen, divorces do come about like that," retorted Alverighi, "and the reason is that Europe is driven mad by conceit. When a European has made a little money he becomes intoxicated, and gets it into his head that it is his right to live in an Olympus where he will neither see nor touch anything which is not beautiful or unique. Then there 's nothing more to be done with him. He can no longer sympathise with his fellows. He thinks himself infallible, a very god. He turns into a Caligula."

"Cheer up!" said Cavalcanti, laughing, "not every millionaire who is fond of elegant things is a Caligula."

"Then they are snobs and idiots," retorted Alverighi promptly, "who pay double for everything, so as to have some solid ground for thinking it beautiful."

Hereupon Cavalcanti objected that the snob judges things by their price, while the man of real taste adjusts the price to the things. By way of answer, Alverighi related, laughingly, that one day he had read in the Place Vendôme at Paris a huge advertisement, since removed, which had been posted up to attract South

Americans, and which ran: "The most expensive shoemaker in the world." The most expensive, and therefore the best! I then recounted—the anecdote came back to my mind at that moment—how Mrs. Feldmann had told me that the pearls she wore in the *Cordova* were false, because she had left the real ones at Paris; and how she had philosophised on the vanity of human opinion with regard to false pearls and real pearls, inasmuch as the world judged them to be true or false according as it did or did not believe the wearer or donor to be rich enough for the rôle. The anecdote appealed to Alverighi, who, turning again to Cavalcanti, said:

"Do you see? Even an elegant woman can reason sensibly sometimes."

"What 's the conclusion, then?" replied Cavalcanti smiling. "Vivekananda is right. If the refinements of civilisation are an illusion, and riches, as they increase, lose the power of procuring new and more intense pleasures, the wise man will not desire them, at least beyond a certain measure. What end do riches serve, if they procure nothing but illusions and no genuine joy?"

"They serve to provide worry, ennui, illness, and insomnia," announced Alverighi resolutely.

"Much obliged! Then I 'm not taking any."

"Because you are a sybarite. The only real ascetics of modern times are insatiable monopolists of millions, like us. I mean it, don't laugh; we who work day and night, go without home-life and sleep, and live like nomads in railway-trains and steamers. And what is our object, what do we hope for? Do you suppose we enjoy our riches? What, beyond the mysterious intoxication of having created them, do they procure for us except cares, troubles, or illness? I repeat that I intend

to accumulate a hundred millions; one hundred, not one less, laboriously one by one. But shall I be any happier when I am the envied lord of one hundred millions? Will my life be one whit the better or the more beautiful for them? I shall be worn out, sick, and morose. I shall have endless worries and anxieties and misgivings——"

But here Cavalcanti interrupted him.

"But there lies what is the great mistake of our times and of America. To get rich for the sake of getting rich, as Rosetti told you, is a vain illusion. Riches are and can only be a means——"

"Riches are only divine if they are an end in themselves," cried Alverighi vehemently. "I am aware that the glib philosophers of the present day ridicule such an ideal, and abuse the Americans for having set it before the world. They solemnly prove its absurdity, though they might as well spare themselves the trouble. For are not all ideals absurd which go beyond the interest of the individual, when judged by the standard of that interest? Are they not all vain illusions? Is not the soldier who lays down his life for his country an imbecile, judged by the standard of his personal interests? What does his country's salvation matter to him after he is dead? Would it not be better for him to survive a defeat than to die in the hour of victory? Without a doubt we work and we do not enjoy. The vast torrent of riches which we, giants of finance, pour over the world, do not profit us, but the careless, ignorant, wretched, envious, stupid masses who loathe and persecute us; and who now, thanks to us, have what their fathers had not, bread, bedding, clothes, health, a ray of light in their clouded intellects, and an assured future. Ferrero is quite right. It is not the millionaires who set the example of luxury and extravagance in America,

but those middle and lower classes who are continually accusing the millionaires of being Sardanapaluses. Absolute nonsense! But why do I, why do we, work ourselves to death? I don't know, and I don't want to know; it does n't matter to me. The work which consumes and weakens us, the conquest of the earth, is as transcendent as wars, revolutions, and all the other great events of history. And we suffer, waste away, and die, happy in this frenzy whose motive we do not understand because a mysterious demon possesses us. We have the right, therefore, to say that riches are divine in themselves, and that we live not for ourselves but for others, for the world, for the future, consumed and refined by a divine fire, which purifies our intentions of their inevitable dross. You, Rosetti, said yesterday that man must in the end disinterest himself from riches. It is true. You are right; Vivekananda is right. But the true way of disinteresting oneself from them is not to condemn them, but to desire them for themselves, and not for the vain pleasures which fools expect them to provide. Underhill was the real modern ascetic, the purest and most truly disinterested man in the world; just the opposite of the Feldmanns, who wished to enjoy their riches. They posed as æsthetes and persons of refinement, did they? and used their money to humiliate their fellows? Then all I can say is, they deserve their fate!"

CHAPTER II

ALVERIGHI had made good the ground he had lost. No one, not even Cavalcanti, answered his last outburst. We all kept silence, till at last, seeing that no one wanted to speak, Rosetti, who had just finished sipping his coffee, said:

"Well, what about Mrs. Feldmann? You 've forgotten all about her, Alverighi. What ought she to do, if the only use of riches is to make more riches? Ought she to go down with her husband to Wall Street? Ought she to try and get herself made managing director of an oil company?"

Alverighi was silent for a moment, and then said, rather curtly:

"Oh, she 's only a woman."

"Is that any reason for ignoring her?" answered Rosetti, with a laugh. "Women form the half, more or less, of the human race. If action—war, business, government, for instance—is the only reason of life, what is woman's rôle in the world, apart from bringing sons into it and, so long as they are young and pretty, amusing men in their spare time?"

Alverighi was slightly disconcerted.

"Would you acknowledge, then, a woman's right to spend her husband's money as she pleases?"

"No," replied Rosetti. "But I think that you are forgetting for a moment, as you did the other day when

you were discussing progress, that to produce riches is not enough; one must also consume them. If not, what is the use of producing them? We agree that there are, and that there cannot help being, men who use their riches to make riches, and have no other ambition. But it is surely natural that there should be others —women, for instance, and not women only but many men, or even the majority of men—who desire riches for the purpose of converting them into enjoyment. If there were not, the others, those demoniacal giants of finance, as you call them, would be condemned to stand the livelong day with their hands in their pockets, and wouldn't get a chance, poor things, of sacrificing themselves for the good of mankind in general. Well, then, the majority will wish to increase their riches for the purpose of increasing their enjoyments. Now, there are only two ways of increasing enjoyments, either by multiplying the quantity or by varying the quality of the things which produce them. Suppose I like wine, and try to earn more money for the purpose of gratifying my taste. I can either gratify it by drinking a greater quantity of the same brand, or by drinking a better brand. But it is obvious that mere quantity sooner or later produces satiation. Consequently, when a certain quantity has been reached, either the rich man's desire succeeds in finding some superior source of satisfaction, that is to say, translates quantity into quality, or riches are useless. Snobbery? Yes, that 's an obvious target nowadays! But think for one moment: is n't snobbery itself an effort to translate quantity into quality? You cannot forgive the Feldmanns because having multiplied tenfold their already ample riches, they have tried untiringly to find the road to Olympus. But don't be

in too much of a hurry. A peasant woman comes to town, enters a factory, and scrapes together a few sovereigns. What does she do with them? Does she buy some more peasant's clothes? No; she buys what she thinks are more beautiful clothes. She copies the town and its fashions. She tricks herself out in scarves, ribbons, and frills. In short, she tries to translate quantity into quality. Every one nowadays, socialists and sovereigns alike, is bent on seconding the proletariat in their efforts to rise, that is to say, in their efforts to ape the upper classes, to translate quantity, represented by their increased wages, into quality. The rise of the proletariat signifies the snobbery of the workingman. We have discussed progress at some length the last few days. Well, for what reason does that very barren word *progress* sound so pregnant to modern ears? Because progress signifies the snobbery of nations. Statisticians marshal their figures in lines and columns, and prove that in our day everything increases or decreases rapidly, from year to year one might almost say; things like population, riches, trade, bank deposits, railways, passengers, schools, telephones, crimes, births, deaths, marriages, bankruptcies, illiterates, and so on. But nations are not content with reading the statisticians' figures. They want them to sing to them, to tell them in dulcet strains that they are becoming stronger, wiser, nobler, greater; in a word, better. The theories of progress, be they good or bad, which are invented by the dozen nowadays, are merely attempts to translate quantity into quality, abstract numbers into concrete virtues, for the people's sake."

Rosetti's argument was clear and logical; but it did not disarm Alverighi.

"The masses are quite right," he said, "because,

thanks to machinery, they can, to borrow your expression, translate quantity into quality, that is, dress every day with a certain elegance unknown to their grandfathers. The rich, on the contrary, cannot. What difference is there, so far as clothes are concerned, between you and me and Rockefeller? The days are gone by when one could say of a musketeer officer, like D'Artagnan, that he went about dressed up in lace like a high altar! Machinery has created a profusion of articles of medium quality, while banishing the few articles of extraordinary perfection of which our ancestors were so proud. Consequently they have made riches, in excess of a certain amount, useless in the hands of their possessors."

This remark struck us all as so true that we did not hesitate to endorse it. I observed that linotype and the rotary press were ruining public taste and literary style, as they encouraged the public to read and authors to write at express speed. Classical studies were on the wane, because nobody was willing to lose time learning the difficult rules of elegant writing, when all that was asked of a pen was that it should have wings. Cavalcanti observed that the artists of times past were content to paint but little, and to paint that little well, while those of to-day spent their time from morning to night dashing off illustrations for books, newspapers, and reviews, caricatures, wrappers, and posters. Rosetti facetiously deplored the decadence of cheese, saying that, fond though he was of it, he had almost given up eating it, because he could not get it good; and that several cheesemongers had explained to him that machinery made cheese in large quantities and at great speed, but of inferior quality. The Admiral in his turn remarked that machinery, at the same time

that it swept away literary style, the flower of the art of painting, and the delicious cheese of which Theocritus' shepherds were so fond, had swept away chivalry also. He observed that the code of good manners could not be scrupulously observed among people who rushed madly about all day long. Finally the decorative arts were cited by Cavalcanti, who remarked that the decorators were so much occupied nowadays in meeting the needs of a capricious and insistent public that they had no time to elaborate and perpetuate a durable style.

Although some of these remarks were prompted by a spirit of hostility to machinery, Alverighi pretended not to notice their real drift, and used them as a take-off for the conclusion to which he now jumped.

"You see, then, that pleasure is a plant for small pots. To dream of enjoyment in terms of millions, or even thousands, is like asking for the entire Pampas to plant a rose-bush. Besides, did not even you, Rosetti, admit the other evening that above a certain grade of perfection it is not possible to distinguish gradations in the beauty or goodness of things—to say whether a bottle of champagne or of Bordeaux is the better, or whether a picture by Titian or one by Raphael is the more beautiful? Did you not say that infinitesimal differences in quality cannot be calculated? Very well, then; the man who has ten millions may perhaps be able to get ten times as much enjoyment as he who has only one. But the man who has a hundred millions will not be able to enjoy ten times more than the man who has ten, to eat ten times more succulent titbits, to live in a house or wear clothes of ten times greater magnificence, or, if you like, be loved by ten times as many ten-times-more-beautiful

women! He is bound to come up against one of the horns of this trilemma: either he must spend his riches on others, as the millionaires of North America do, or he must let himself be duped by the cheats who give the palm of excellence only to what is most expensive, as the rich men of South America are, I am afraid, rather too fond of doing; or he must abandon himself to the distracting mania for impossible refinements, hunting for what does not exist, as the Feldmanns do. Modern riches do not, cannot, and are not meant to, benefit their possessors, but the world in general. They belong to the nation, to progress, to civilisation, to the future. Their so-called proprietor is only their caretaker, as Carnegie says. I would rather call him, not their caretaker, but their victim, their martyr. We rich men ought to be venerated like the saints in the middle ages."

A chorus of laughter and protests prevented him from going on. He laughed himself, and Rosetti said:

"You would be right, if . . ." He paused, then added: "What you say reminds me of a mythological story which was told me years ago by some one or other on a voyage to the United States. . . . You won't be offended if I inflict it on you? Mythology is now only a toy for babies to play with. But let us pretend for one minute that we are babies again, after all our philosophising. Besides, it's a modernised version of the story: how Prometheus and Vulcan ran away to America."

But at this point he stopped and looked round the room. It was empty, as dinner had come to an end some time ago, and the stewards were waiting for us to go, before clearing away.

"Suppose we go on deck?" he said. "The time has come for a smoke."

But the Admiral wished first of all to go and see Mrs. Feldmann, and my wife to see the boy. We agreed therefore, as it was then half-past eight, to meet again on the promenade deck at nine. In due course we found ourselves seated in a circle on the port side of the promenade deck, all except the Admiral, who arrived twenty minutes late, explaining that his friend had broken down again during his visit.

"She is in despair!" he said. "She really must love her husband even more than I thought she did."

We discussed the point for a short time. Then we all joined in asking Rosetti to tell us the story he had mentioned. Rosetti smiled, lighted a cigar, and began:

"You must know that for some time past, Prometheus, bound on Mount Caucasus, had been eating his own heart out even more effectively than the vulture had been doing it for him. Imagine his chagrin at having fashioned men out of mud, and given them fire and taught them the arts, only to see himself bound, through the jealousy of the gods, on a snowy peak in the Caucasus, and forgotten on earth by the men who, seeing him in chains, had jumped to the conclusion that he must have committed some fearful crime in creating and teaching themselves. They were quite certain that they had never asked him to do so. Prometheus wanted to avenge himself, and evolved in the solitude of the Caucasus a strange scheme. He thought of escaping to some great desert and there creating with his fire a new, extraordinary, marvellous, absolutely unique race of Titans, which should be not only one hundred times more robust than his previous creation, but also fearless and incorruptible, so that

Jove could neither terrify them with his thunderbolts nor corrupt them. The enterprise would have seemed an impossible one to anybody else. In fact, when he broached it to Vulcan (whom Jove sent every now and then to test his chains and see if they were sound), and asked him why he stayed on in Olympus, he, the pariah of the gods, the butt of Jove, Venus, and Mars, and invited him to fly with him and promised, if he would help him, to make him sole god of Olympus, Vulcan thought that Prometheus' sufferings must have driven him mad.

But at last, one fine day, Christopher Columbus discovered America. You must know that the discovery of America caused a great upset in heaven as well as on earth. The old gods, who had grown accustomed to the rule of the little Mediterranean, were not prepared for so annoying an addition to their empire. Like modern governments and diplomatists, they did not want to be bothered. As far as the world and geography were concerned, they were loyal to the principle of the *statu quo*. Consequently endless discussions and quarrels arose between the gods of the Mediterranean, over the question what they should do with the new world, whether they should colonise it with nymphs, fauns, dryads, heroes, and so on. Prometheus, and Vulcan, who had at last made up his mind, took advantage of the upset to turn their backs on the Mediterranean. They bolted to America with the famous Pilgrim Fathers. Imagine the consternation in Olympus when it was known that the stealer of fire was no longer on his Caucasian peak, but in America, and Vulcan with him. Jove quickly summoned his council of ministers—my mistake—of gods. It was unanimously decided to cashier the vulture. There was then a long debate on a motion that an

expedition be sent to America to capture the runaways. But America was such a long way off! At last Minerva proposed an amendment which was worthy of the wisest of the goddesses. 'America,' she said, 'is a vast desert; so we have no use for it. Why not make it into a prison for Prometheus, and Vulcan his fellow-runaway? Let us leave it to them. What will the two poor wretches do, alone with their fire in that desert, where no men live or ever will live, unless we bring them, in addition to their fire, the other comforts of life which we control?' The amendment was carried.

"Prometheus and Vulcan alone of the gods of the old Mediterranean Olympus settled in exile in America. At first they wandered desolate and miserable over the plains and savage mountains of the new world, with only their shadows for company; for Vulcan, cowed by long years of humiliation at the hands of the Mediterranean gods, would not believe that it was possible to create Titans as Prometheus proposed, who should be faithful, incorruptible, and fearless. Had any one ever heard of an animal, a man, or even a demi-god who was incorruptible and fearless? But Prometheus stuck to his guns. He discovered coal-mines, and subterranean lakes of petroleum, and with these combustibles and the electricity which he had discovered in the old world he began to create in the desert the new race of Titans . . . I meant to say, machines! What are steam- and electricity-driven machines, the railway, the telephone, the telegraph, the dynamo, the Bessemer oven, agricultural machines, and all the rest of them, but the second theft of the fire, principle of all the arts, or, as they say nowadays, of every department of progress? And then there was seen that miracle which you, Alverighi, have often and justly

extolled. The deserts of the two Americas, which the old Mediterranean gods had condemned to everlasting sterility, began to blossom with incredible abundance. . . . More mighty than space, time, the desert, the mountain, the ocean, and the earth, the Titans swiftly and indefatigably ransacked every one of Nature's secret corners.

"Picture to yourselves the astonishment and elation of the few desperadoes who had exposed themselves to countless trials in their search for liberty in the deserts of America! They fell straightway on their knees before the Titans, crying: 'At last we have found the gods who are men's true friends! the gods whom we have been seeking since the beginning of time! Gods who are unsuspicious, amenable to prayer, disinterested, and generous; not like the Mediterranean gods, whom for centuries past we have entreated to give us abundance, safety, riches, and peace, and they have given them to us only in driblets, with reprimands and scowls into the bargain.' Minerva, wisest of the goddesses, who was all on the alert, was perplexed. You will remember that it was she who had suggested imprisoning Prometheus and Vulcan in America. She hastened to Jove's presence. . . . Jove, seated on his golden throne, listened to her, then slowly and solemnly turned his gaze towards the new world, contemplated for a moment the immense deserts, some covered with snow, others scorched by the sun, in which only with the utmost difficulty could his eyes discern here and there a village or encampment, and shrugging his shoulders, replied: 'They 're not worth a thought, my dear.'

"But all this time the news of the discovery in the new world of these new, miraculous gods, who were really friends to man and not tyrants or policemen, had been

spreading through the old world. The bolder spirits set sail, the others followed in their train. Bit by bit the stream from the old world in search of the new gods swelled, became a torrent, and finally developed into an avalanche. In the end even the gods of Olympus began to take fright. Their clientèle began to dwindle. Every day one or other of them complained to Jove about it. At last even the Muses went before him, I think. . . . Yes, I know they did, they went before him when Prometheus invented the electric piano-player! Of course; headed by Apollo, with dishevelled hair, the Muses marched in procession before the throne of Jove, and shrilly protested that Prometheus threatened them with an atrocious outrage. Jove, to tell the truth, like all potentates who have grown old in the purple, had become rather soft. He was also somewhat preoccupied by Leda, Danaë, and some other gay member of the *demi-ciel*. You see, he was getting on in years! . . . Well, he 'd become a Jove-in-office, so all he said was: 'I will cause inquiries to be made; you may rest assured that any step which may be necessary will be taken.' But no step at all was taken.

"One day the Americans actually had the impudence to summon all the gods of the universe, including the old Mediterranean gods, to a congress in Chicago. At last even Jove woke up, or rather gave vent to the wildest outbursts of fury. He let loose an earthquake on southern Italy. He drove Leda and Danaë from his presence in a rage. He summoned a council of the gods. He cried that the time for action had come, and began to lash the new Titans with his lightning. But alas! the ingenious Prometheus had found out the way to create faithful, incorruptible, and fearless Titans. He had created them without brains.

"When Prometheus' diabolical stratagem was recognised in Olympus, the whole place was in an uproar. Suppose men were at last really to come to their senses, open their eyes and realise that, to live happy lives, they need only worship gods who were blind, deaf, dumb, and brainless! Negotiations must be at once opened. Concessions must be made to Vulcan to induce him to impose upon his numberless followers the cult of the old Mediterranean gods. Mars, Pluto, Ceres, and Bacchus declared themselves ready to join Prometheus' school, and to make war, wine, harvests, and gold by machinery. Minerva said that she would not mind going to a German university to be 'finished,' and to study differential calculus, physics, and chemistry. Venus said that she was ready to settle down with Vulcan under the same roof and to promise to be faithul to him, and, what 's more, to keep her promise this time. Jove and Juno promised to treat him as a son who has done great credit to his parents in the world. Apollo, who had worn a look of thunder throughout the session, alone said nothing. So Mercury was despatched on a mission . . . and this is the answer he brought back: Vulcan and Prometheus accepted the terms offered, but with one condition annexed: that the gods should not undertake at any time, for any motive, reason, or pretext, to impose any restraint, condition, or limit on the speed or strength of the Titans; otherwise the Titans, docile and brainless though they were, would rebel against Vulcan and Prometheus themselves. 'Let them run till they burst!' growled Jove in a rage.

"The gods were on the point of approving the compact when Apollo jumped up, and cried: 'Never, never! It may be, Zeus, that old age makes that sceptre which you

have wielded so long and so vigorously weigh heavy in your hand. It may be that the softness and lassitude which always accompany long spells of secure sovereignty incline you, my Olympian colleagues, to regard this knavish snare as a reasonable compact. But I assure you that I, the heat and the light of the world, the life of every seed, the first impulse of every movement, the primordial impetus of every force, the universal beacon of truth, of beauty, and of virtue; I, who light, warm, renovate, vivify, and guide the world on its path; I will not bring myself to accept as my equals, here on Olympus, the two impostors who are deluding the miserable race of humans down below, dressing themselves up as Apollo at the crossroads, hanging along the streets of the towns every evening ridiculous little pocket suns, persuading men to break the sacred law of day and night which I dictate to men as the principle of wisdom and of health, and lighting tiny fires here and there about the world and inventing little machines, to make men believe that they can do what even I could not do. It would be a shame, and an act of folly as well to receive them here, and to agree to the proposed undertaking. Listen to what I tell you. . . . I tell you that the day on which every limit, every restraint and measure is removed from the speed and force of the new, brainless Titans, we, gods of the old Mediterranean Olympus, shall all be hurled from our golden thrones; and one only god will rule the two worlds, adored by the multitude with heads bowed down to the ground, as at the dawn of history; and that god will be Fire!'"

At this point Rosetti suddenly broke off. We had all listened with amusement to this fantastic satire on machinery, but we were none of us prepared for its

conclusion. Alverighi only gave expression to what we all thought, when he said, after a short pause:

"Well, and what then?"

"What then? what about it?" answered Rosetti, still smiling.

"I should much like to know," replied Alverighi, "what answer you have to make to what I said. Because you have not yet answered . . . and I think that the others——"

"Did n't you see the point?" asked Rosetti, pretending to be a little surprised. "And yet Apollo is the God of Light. . . . But of course; I forgot, artificial light has ruined every one's eyesight. Must I then clarify Apollo? illuminate the light?" Here he drew out his watch. "It is close on eleven o'clock, and it would take me a long time. I 'm tired. I walked about for several hours to-day at Las Palmas, and at my age . . . If you will allow me, I will explain the story of Apollo to-morrow."

He took leave of us. We stayed some time, discussing his strange anecdote.

"It seems to me," said the Admiral, "a brilliant satire on machinery. Signora Ferrero will be sure to like it. But I cannot see the connection between it and this evening's discussions."

"I think he 's got another attack of lunacy," said Alverighi.

Cavalcanti, on the other hand, gave rein to his admiration for the lively sarcasm of the story, without bothering himself about what might be its ultimate object. But I said that it undoubtedly had an object, and I repeated what Rosetti had said to me the evening before about irony.

"So we had better wait and see," I concluded.

CHAPTER III

I HAD no sooner put out the light than the thought of Mrs. Feldmann and her troubles, slightly dimmed by the evening's debate, came back to my mind. I was profoundly sorry for her, but at the same time I felt a sort of vague reluctance to be convicted by events of being a false prophet. How had I come to miss the mark so completely? How was it that I had not at once, at the very start, guessed that there was, that there must be, that there could not possibly help being, a woman in the case, even if Mrs. Feldmann, through inexperience, *amour propre*, and a determination to shut her eyes to the facts, assured me that there was not? At the same time the possibility occurred to me that she had not been frank in her confessions; and I quickly began to have my suspicions on this score. Was it likely that a man, if he were not a lunatic, would divorce his wife, after twenty-two years of married life, in a casual sort of way, just because their æsthetic tastes differed and he had met another woman whom he liked better? There must be other more serious reasons. I tried to reason my suspicions away, but in vain. Was she a victim, or was she acting a part? I lost myself in a sea of conjecture. Again, as on the evenings on which we had discussed *Hamlet* and crossed the equator, I seemed to plunge into the emptiness of the whole reduced to nothing; but this

time the plunge saddened and frightened me. What was the use of thought, study, research, travel? I had deluded myself into thinking that I was on the track of the desires and thoughts of the generations, states, and peoples of the ancient world. I had undertaken two long voyages for the sake of getting to know America. Yet here I was, completely mistaken in my estimate of a woman and the real position of her affairs. What was there that we could really know? Not even whether the earth revolves round the sun! The conversation of the preceding days came back to my mind. I thought with envy of the men of action—explorers, sailors, bankers, and the like—and of Alverighi himself. . . . Then, suddenly, I rebelled! Two weeks of "leisure without self-reproach" had sapped my energy unduly. I set to work to summarise arguments to prove that the sun stands still and the earth revolves. I got quite excited over it. I began to shake off the comfortable torpor in which I had vegetated hitherto. . . . While I was thus engaged, my berth began to sway, and I heard the joints of the ship creak as if they were about to burst. They were but the ordinary noises of a ship at night-time; but that night they seemed to remind me all at once of the eternal instability of all things, and once more my thoughts, and the universe with them, began to waver. Was Mrs. Feldmann a victim, or was she playing a part? Did the earth really revolve round the sun?

I don't know how long this reverie lasted. What is certain is that I did not get to sleep till very late, when lapped in celestial space, half-way between sun and earth. When I woke next morning, I thought of Mrs. Feldmann with some uneasiness, not unmixed with diffidence. But I had no sooner left my cabin than I

overheard, on deck, some remarks exchanged by the fair Genoese and the São Paulo doctor's wife.

"It 's an act of revenge on the husband's part," the fair Genoese said. "She must have played him some trick, and he pretended not to notice it, but at the first opportunity——"

But the doctor's wife seemed doubtful.

"She seems to me to be a sensible, reliable sort of woman."

The other shook her head, and said with a smile full of meaning:

"What 'll you bet? That 's not my idea at all. Do you suppose her husband would go off and marry the governess, if she had not given him some serious reason for doing so? I 'll be bound that he 's marrying the governess to pique her!"

"But does that strike you as a nice game to play?" answered the doctor's wife.

"Men are made like that, as you know well enough," replied the Genoese. "There are certain things they cannot get over. Woe betide any one who 's guilty of them. At any rate," she added with a complacent smile, "there 'll be no more five-hundred-franc scent-baths for her."

"Poor thing!" was the other's more Christian observation.

"She goes straight to the point, anyhow," I thought.

My conscience rebelled against so positive an indictment, and I tried to rebut it with all the arguments I could think of. And yet . . . I felt that I too, sorely against my will, was beginning to harbour suspicions. One never knows, in certain cases. . . . During the morning I saw neither the Admiral nor Rosetti nor Alverighi: but I met Cavalcanti, and we talked about the Apollo

story. I recounted to him that the night before I had made an effort to nail the sun down again in the middle of the solar system. We discussed at length modern science, which is undergoing a process of volatilisation in the actual thoughts of men of science, and the extent to which critical philosophy has again come into vogue. I could not resist discussing Mrs. Feldmann also, and telling him what the fair Genoese had said about her. He smiled, and said with a shrug:

"Why not?"

Even Cavalcanti, then, had his misgivings! At lunch Rosetti and the Admiral appeared; but no one asked the latter, nor did he volunteer any information about Mrs. Feldmann. We all seemed to feel some sudden scruple about alluding to the subject. For some reason this silence only helped to strengthen my doubts about her innocence. I tried to induce Rosetti to throw open the hidden treasures of Apollonian wisdom. But Rosetti pleaded for postponement till the evening after dinner, as he had to write up his diary that afternoon. Accordingly we discussed other topics; Signor Yriondo, for instance, who was now convalescent. Christian Science had conquered!

After lunch we ascertained that at noon we had reached 31° 42′ lat. and 11° 12′ long. I drew the Admiral aside before we separated for the siesta, and asked him for news of his friend. She had passed a restless night. In the morning she had sent for him, and had told him, once and again, with tears and sighs, that she could not yet understand it all; that between her and her husband there had never been any serious quarrel or ground of suspicion; that Miss Robbins had always been the best, most loyal, and most sincere of women; that she thought she must be dreaming,

and kept asking herself if the whole world had not been reversed.

"We 've worked the words 'reverse' and 'reversible' pretty hard this trip," I thought to myself.

I asked him, as discreetly as I could, if Mrs. Feldmann struck him as sincere. He did not answer yes or no straight out. I then said that, after all, there must be some reason for so strange a divorce. Perhaps he, knowing her husband, might be able to guess it. He looked at me, smiled, and, shirking the direct issue, answered:

"I can't believe that Feldmann is mad—a man who 's made so large a fortune!"

He hesitated a little; then gradually let himself go, and ended by telling me that Feldmann accused his wife of being an insufferable, headstrong, punctilious, spiteful woman. He used often to say: "You who see her, all frills and smiles, in her drawing-room, think her an angel. But you ought to try and live with her!" He complained that she was jealous and suspicious; spied upon him for no reason, opened his letters, had every step, letter, and word of his watched.

"And the funny part of it is," he added, "that only a short time ago his wife was telling me for the thousandth time that she had never had a qualm about her husband. You 'll be a clever chap if you can make head or tail of the whole business."

I then asked him if he thought that the husband had any bone to pick with his wife on the score of infidelity. His answer was precise.

"Certainly not. No breath of suspicion has ever attached to her on that score. I 've never heard either the husband or any one else express the slightest doubt on the subject. . . . You 've only to go near her

to feel that you are in the presence of a straight woman. The husband's complaints were on another score."

Again he hesitated; then, after binding me to secrecy, said:

"Shall I tell you the strangest part of it all? One day he confided to me that he suspected his wife of wishing to poison him!"

"Poison him?" I cried. "That 's going a bit too far!"

We separated for the siesta. Throughout the afternoon I turned over these confidences in my mind. This time, too, these strange accusations, however often I pooh-poohed them, forced themselves upon me again, and filled me with new uncertainties and doubts. Could a sane man invent such things, without some substratum of truth? I felt my uneasiness, distrust, and aversion grow.

"I 'm sure the husband must have exaggerated," I thought, almost in spite of myself; "but there must be some wrong on her side, for her to have brought such a disaster upon herself. Even if she has not played him false, things like that don't happen to a woman who is really virtuous, good, and gentle."

The tale about the false pearls, too, which I had repeated the first evening at table, had gone the round of the ship. In that connection I heard the jeweller make some rather surprising remarks to the fair Genoese and the São Paulo doctor's wife.

"I 'm not in the least surprised," he said. "I had my suspicions, although it is difficult to tell real pearls from false at a distance and without handling them. But once or twice she asked me to show her any nice piece of jewellery I had with me. As a rule I don't bother about business when I 'm on a voyage; but I

consented just for once, to oblige her. But I saw at once that she knew nothing about precious stones and jewellery."

"I, too," answered the Genoese, "have never believed her to be so rich as people said."

"But are we going to get that present now, I wonder," said the doctor's wife, half joking, half in earnest.

The adverse wind was gaining strength, and Mrs. Feldmann's prestige was nearing the rocks. The gloomy, grey, rainy day soon came to an end. Autumn was rapidly shortening the days. We dined quietly—Mrs. Feldmann did not appear, fortunately, for my reluctance to meet her was growing—and cracked a few jokes about the approaching debate on Apollo, for which Rosetti took us after dinner into the smoking-room with the red walls and golden flowers, for the night was already too cold for us to sit outside. We sat round a table. Alverighi supplied the champagne, and Rosetti, after lighting a cigar, said:

"Apollo meant to say . . ." He paused, as if he scented a difficulty ahead; then, suddenly changing his tack, and turning to Alverighi, said: "So we agree, Alverighi. Machinery has robbed kings, princes, and the millionaires who have supplanted the kings, of that small number of excellent and beautiful things or things reputed to be such, which the hand of man used at one time to make, and has given the world a profusion of objects of less rare and abstruse merit. In short, it has caused quantity to triumph at the expense of quality. In that it has only obeyed an eternal law. For I may wish to make in a certain time things of a certain quality, that is to say, similar to a certain model of perfection which I have before my eyes or in my

mind. But in that case I can no longer make any quantity I like of those things. I shall have to be content with the quantity I can turn out by working with all my might. Or, on the other hand, I may say: I want so many things of such a quality. But in that case I cannot fix any date my fancy chooses by which to finish them. Or, again, I may say: I want so great a quantity in such a time. Very well, but I shall have to content myself then with such quality as I can get. Consequently, whoever would increase the quantity and curtail the time, must abate the quality. That is just what machinery has done, as you said yesterday; 'and a very good thing too,' you added. 'Let Mrs. Feldmann complain of not being able to buy the miracles of her dreams with all her hundred millions; what's her loss is gain for thousands of other people.' But if the machines which we work to-day have conquered the old manual arts, and this is all to the good, it will be better still if they are conquered in their turn, as in fact is already happening, by machines of two, three, or even five times as great speed, which will make things of still worse quality, but in still greater abundance and in a still shorter time. Why should not machinery, after conquering once, carry its conquests further? Why need progress halt half-way? And there you have the reason why Apollo warned the gods of Olympus not to give Vulcan and Prometheus the undertaking I mentioned. For either our civilisation will succeed in checking the mad hurry of machinery, or what is now usually called progress will flood the world with an ever-increasing abundance of ever-deteriorating things; machinery will obliterate all the differences and qualities of things, as the Vedanta philosophy would have us do by force of meditation;

then not only the unfortunates who, like the Feldmanns, possess one hundred millions, but the millionaires first, and then even the comfortably-off will no longer be able to translate quantity into quality, and riches will become useless to every one, in proportion as their sum total increases. In other words, a civilisation whose every effort is directed to the increase of quantity must end in a vast and frantic orgy."

This rapid and unexpected speech caught us all unprepared. We all kept silence for a moment, while Rosetti looked at us as if awaiting our objections. Then, when he saw that nobody was going to answer, he turned to Gina, saying:

"Signora, you entertained us the other day with a spirited attack on machinery. You accused it of making men insatiable, of creating a permanent dearth, of squandering natural riches which cannot grow again. You were alluding, I presume, to the fecundity of the earth, to its forests and mines; above all, to the latent heat, the potential energy, stored up in the coal-mines, the oil-wells, and the waterfalls, which is indeed the first principle of practically all the hubbub and racket and meanderings and whirligigs in which, under the name of progress, the world lives and, as it seems, takes its pleasure. But suppose we were besieged in a city and had corn enough for three months, would you propose, Signora, not to distribute a single sack of it, because, if you did, after three months there would be none left; so that every one would die of starvation at once, in order to avoid having to die eventually, three months later? Yet you are right, Signora, in my opinion, when you say that machinery makes men insatiable. But that is not because we consume much more than the ancients did. The reason seems to me

—how shall I put it?—more intrinsic, and at the same time the secret and deadly vice of modern civilisation. For that civilisation, debasing ever more and more the quality of things so as to increase the quantity of them, takes from desire its natural check, from quantity its only intrinsic measure, which is, in point of fact, quality. Measure is the synthesis of quality and of quantity, says Hegel, if I remember rightly. It is easy to laugh at the mania, which all, both rich and poor, have, to translate quantity into quality. But is it just to do so? Champagne is a sacred rite of American hospitality. Why have you, and why has Signor Vazquez, given us the opportunity of drinking such a lot of it? Why do all the Argentines feel themselves bound to offer any friend or guest they wish to honour, a bumper of it? Because champagne is considered the nectar, the ambrosia, the hydromel of our times. Let us allow that this may be an illusion. But suppose the wines to be a republic of equals, without a lower class and a nobility. In that case courtesy, unable to offer superior brands of them, would offer a superior quantity. You would have had a whole tun of it brought, barbarian fashion. We should have drunk ourselves tipsy. And do you think we should have enjoyed ourselves any more? This trifling example will give you a rough idea of the part played by quality and values in the world, to speak like the modern philosophers. You, Alverighi, think that history put the cart before the horse, because, before discovering America and before having, I won't say conquered, but even got to know the world, men made such efforts to create arts, philosophies, religions, and legal codes. But why, do you think, did the great civilisations of the past—up to the French Revolution—

consider the increase of riches either as a thing of danger or as a thing of secondary importance, an object of thought fit for obscure and base people, even as the Moslems do to-day? Was every one in those days mad or foolish? Everybody nowadays considers art to be a luxury, detached from and exalted above the necessities of life. But how can we explain the fact, then, that art flourished much more luxuriantly than now in times and civilisations which were extremely poor in comparison with ours? I have travelled in Greece, Asia Minor, and the Ægean Isles, the cradle of poetry, literature, sculpture, and architecture. What miserably poor lands; and it 's not the fault of the Turks alone! One simply cannot conceive how the Greeks lived in them, especially when they had such feeble tools to exploit them with. But Plato despised mechanicians, and the Greeks hoped to improve the quality of the world by making it more beautiful; for art is pure quality, as even you, Alverighi, allowed the other day. Were they, too, mad? No; they were in the right. They knew that quality—call it beauty, justice, goodness, glory, sanctity, nobility, greatness, or what you like—is the salt and sauce of life; that something which varies the flavour of things, variegates the aspect of the universe, awakens and appeases new desires, purges life of tedium and satiety; the force which into the mathematical monotony of quantity introduces variety, which is the first principle of progress and of civilisation, the root of happiness, the reason of life and of action, the world's divine smile."

"And you," interrupted Alverighi, "tell me this, you who have made me sweat my guts out, as schoolboys say, for three days past, proving in your despite that the variety of the world is not an illusion? Have

you forgotten your Vedantism? In short, do you or do you not think that the variety of the world is an illusion?"

"It is an illusion, if every one is at liberty to create for himself his own criterion of the beautiful; to affirm that New York is beautiful, simply because it pleases him. Concede this, and the catastrophe of the world is nothing more than a question of time."

"We shall be bound then, in your opinion, to affirm, in chorus and with one voice, that New York is beautiful or ugly? Then allow me to repeat to you what I said the other evening—for indeed, after our long journey, we find ourselves exactly where we started—by force of what principle? on the basis of what criterion? Where shall we find the measure of judgment? There must be an authority, a law, a force, a something, to oblige me to say black, even when I think I see white. And here have we been searching in vain for this something for days past; just as all the philosophers have searched for it ever since the world began, and have not found it yet."

Rosetti looked straight at him, with an almost imperceptible smile.

"The philosophers have not found it," he said. "Quite true; no more have we, for all our talk. Nor have the Feldmanns found it by dint of quarrelling. But you found it, yesterday evening."

"I?" cried Alverighi.

"Yes, you!" replied Rosetti, feeling in his pockets for his matches.

The other paused a moment; then said with a laugh:

"It must be so, since you say it. But I was not aware of it."

Rosetti lighted his cigar again, and went on:

"For ten days past we have been discussing what is the beautiful, the good, or the true, whether it is this art or that, this or that philosophy, whether it is progress, science, or riches. We have travelled from parallel to parallel, from meridian to meridian, in search of the decisive argument, the blade with which to cut the knot, the end with which to unravel the tangle. Every argument, your own as well as ours, was always reversible or refutable in some way or other; and the discussion was eked out with sophism after sophism. When finally our discussion brought us to the question whether riches are good or bad, you said: 'You may argue as much as you like, but men nowadays want riches. They want them, and that 's enough!' And off you went. If, instead of turning your back on us, you had waited one minute more, I should have told you that that decisive argument, that sword, that end of thread, had been found at last; for you had stopped my mouth. What answer could I have made? Is it possible to prove that riches are vain or bad to a man who is inflamed with greed? Or, to a lover, that his mistress is ugly? If I feel a profound admiration for Greek sculpture, or the Italian music of the nineteenth century, or the drama of Shakespeare; if I long to enjoy these works of art again and again, critics and æsthetes may argue themselves black in the face; I shall stand firm as a tower. I want to enjoy the beautiful thing, whatever it is, and that 's enough. If I am possessed by a wave of patriotic fervour, all the philosophers in the world won't make me believe that Pietro Micca[1] was not a hero. If the spirit of Saint Francis has descended upon me, the precepts of the Japanese *Bushido* will inspire me with disgust.

[1] Pietro Micca, Piedmontese artillerist, 1666–1706.

There we have the solution of all the difficulties we have discussed at such length. There it is, as simple and plain as possible. To know what is beautiful or good or true, we must *will* an initial definition of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth. It is not thought, which can affirm and impose a sure criterion of the beautiful, the good, and the true; it is will. Will is the source of values, not philosophy."

He paused a moment, and looked at us. Then, as if our silence told him that his formula was an obscure and difficult one, he continued:

"I am not an expert in these matters, you know. I simply talk about them by ear, so to speak, just as common-sense inspires me. But I cannot understand how and why modern man, as he rushes about the world, can have allowed himself to lose sight of this plain, simple, and ingenuous truth, this unique beacon in the great sea of life, on whose unfailing light the safety of us poor navigators depends. When I came back from America, and, more or less as a pastime, began to study a little on my own account, I could not find my bearings at first. There were so many philosophies, so many æsthetics, so many moralities, so many political parties, so many schools of jurisprudence. And they were all armed to the teeth against each other; volley-firing going on on all sides, most terrible to listen to, but quite harmless in its effects; for—strange to say—every one fired but no one was ever killed! But what was happening? Who was right and who was wrong? What was the object of this strife, with its maximum of shouting and minimum of serious damage? At first I thought that either the world must have gone mad, while I was away in America, or that my senses had been blunted in the Pampas. I could not find the

key to the situation until the day came when I succeeded in understanding what I ought to have understood from the very first: that reason, thought, and philosophy can develop, but cannot prescribe and impose, the first principles of an art and of a morality, the elementary definitions of beauty and of virtue from which every art and every morality start. It is will alone that can prescribe and impose those definitions. Not the will of the individual, though,—mind that; that would only mean a disorder which would lead us straight to Vedantism. The will of each separate individual, when left to itself, is so weak and uncertain that it does not avail to impose even on itself a firm and sure criterion of the good, the beautiful, and the true; how much less could it influence others! The will, therefore, which is wanted to lay the foundations of a morality, an art, or a doctrine must be what one may describe as a 'great' will; a will superior to that of every single individual, which embraces and constrains all the individual wills; the will of a school, that of a sect, a church, a social order, a people, an epoch, a civilisation, several generations, several ages. The greater this composite will is, the better it is. It must emanate as an infinitesimal particle from the mind of every individual, combine on high with its fellows, and descend on the heads of every one, just as the rain, which falls like a gift from heaven in torrents on the earth, has been sucked drop by drop by a process of invisible evaporation from the pores of the earth."

Again he paused. We also were silent, in some perplexity as to his meaning. At last I gave expression to what, as I thought, was in the minds of us all, and begged him to explain to us how will could prescribe these first principles of the beautiful, the true, and the good.

"By limiting itself," he answered laconically, without hesitation, and again paused.

"Limiting itself?" asked Cavalcanti, knitting his brows. "I don't understand. . . . Please explain."

Rosetti thought for a moment, as if he were trying to find the simplest and clearest way of expressing his meaning; then said:

"Let us take art, for instance; for we have discussed art more than anything else. At one point in our discussion on *Hamlet*, you, Signor Cavalcanti, said that art is an infinite thing. You are quite right. I have already told you, Alverighi, the other night, that man can find a principle of beauty in all the opposites; in order and in disorder, in the simple and in the ostentatious, in the classical and in the rococo, in the sun and in the fog, in the light and in the darkness, in lightness and in weight, in the rose and in the orchid, in the Parthenon and in a tumble-down ghetto, in Paris and in New York, in the straight line and in the curve, in violence and in gentleness, in the grace of a child and in the horror of a catastrophe. Yes, man can find a principle of beauty in all these things; but he is not obliged to look for it in any one in preference to any other. Well, then, what will be the result, if every artist in the act of creating, and every amateur in the act of judging, freely chooses the principle which attracts him, following his own inclinations, impulse, or whim, as you, Alverighi, would have him do? The world will become a Tower of Babel, like the *Cordova* in the last few days. Caius will pronounce beautiful what to Titius seems ugly, and *vice versa*, for each will start from a different primary definition of the beautiful; and if Titius and Caius are forced to live together, they cannot help continually misunderstanding each

other and quarrelling, just as the Feldmanns have done. Why, for instance, have we had such long and inconclusive discussions about *Hamlet*, and about Rodin and other artists? Because the definition of the beautiful on which our reasoning was based, was different in the case of each one of us. Each of us was driving at something different. If, then, we want to avoid misunderstandings and quarrels, culminating in complete divorce, like the Feldmanns, we must agree on some limits. Agree, I say. What is a school of art? A literary genre? The style of an epoch? It is one of the infinite forms of beauty, isolated by the will of a school, a generation, a city, a people, or a civilisation; prescribed as the principle and model and unique criterion of universal beauty, and effectuated by a persevering effort. In short, let a generation, a city, a people, or a school, only affirm that the beautiful is either simplicity, proportion, lightness, grace, the straight line, or, if they prefer it, the ostentatious, the affected, the massive, the gigantic, the curve; let them say: 'It is our will that this be beautiful, and that 's enough,' and say it emphatically enough to silence hostile critics and sophists; and they will have a criterion of the beautiful, limited, it is true, but sure, and from it they will be able to reason out precise and certain rules of art, for as many, at least, as have recognised the principle. These rules will be as suitable for the artist who sets to work to create, as for the public who will have to judge his work. They will educate the taste of the public and secure a mutual understanding between public and artist."

At this point Cavalcanti interposed with a vehemence unusual to him:

"At this rate you 'll be resurrecting the literary

genres, the schools of art, and the conventional formularies of the various arts, which our ancestors were obliged to study and submit to."

"Well, why not?" asked Rosetti, with a smile.

"Why not? Why, because beauty is an infinite thing, as you yourself recognised. Because beauty has infinite forms and expressions, and therefore rules and laws without number, which cannot be either formulated, taught, or codified. Either they are felt, or they do not exist at all. Those limitations of yours and the principles to which they give birth, and the rules which can be deduced from those principles, are all purely arbitrary."

"Naturally," answered Rosetti. "Every art must always develop, in a strictly logical way, the principles from which it starts. But these principles are not, and can never be, necessary. Otherwise, how can one explain the fact that all schools of art and all literary genres flourish for a while and then without exception die, it may be sooner or it may be later? If a school or a genre were founded on absolutely necessary principles, it would be eternal, imperishable, and immortal."

"But if the choice is arbitrary," retorted Cavalcanti, " why need we make it? Why need we assert that that is the beautiful, which is only one form of the beautiful? Why need we formulate rules and laws in a sphere over which inspiration ought to be allowed to rule untrammelled? Every rule of art is essentially conventional."

"Naturally," again replied Rosetti.

"It 's all very well to say, 'Naturally,' but conventionality means the negation of the beautiful, the death of art. The beautiful is truth, sincerity, liberty. . . . It is the most comfortable and the most attractive of the roads by which man travels towards Life. Interest—

now at last I understand, and can solve the problem which has worried me so long—is what impels a school, an epoch, a people, the 'great will,' as you put it, to isolate, from among the many principles of beauty which offer themselves, one particular one, and to limit it; that is to say, to proclaim it the chief, or, rather, the unique principle. It suited architects in the baroque style that their contemporaries should judge their style to be the only beautiful one, just as every nation likes to believe its own literature to be the first in the world. . . . Interests are like the creepers in the forests of Brazil, which encircle the trunk of the tree of Life, and try to strangle it!"

"Consequently," interrupted Alverighi, "I am right in saying that machinery and America render a great service to the world in purifying art from the interests which used to defile it."

"Without a doubt," said Cavalcanti. "Moreover it seems to me clear that, just because beauty is infinite, we ought not to limit ourselves. On the contrary, we ought to try to break out of the limitations within which interests would confine us, and, therefore, away from the arbitrary rules of the schools, the conventional prejudices, and the ephemeral vogues of the times."

"In fact, liberty!" urged Alverighi. "I am delighted, Signor Cavalcanti, to have persuaded you."

"Of course!" answered Cavalcanti. "Art is a sort of unique language, eternal and universal, which every nation and time writes with its own characters. From country to country, from half century to half century, what Sainte-Beuve called *les modes de sensibilité* change: the aspirations, the tastes, the forms, the alphabet, in short, with which artists transcribe beauty. But art, like beauty, is unique. Therefore every one seeks and

every one finds in different places the same treasure. There are not several arts, many schools, different styles, but one only art, one only school, a unique style, from Japan to France, from ancient times to the present day. Therefore we ought to try to understand all the arts and all the schools, stripping off from them, one by one, the apparent differences with which times and places and interests invest them; raising ourselves as far as possible above time and space, that we may understand the common language of humanity, eternal and absolute beauty! Do you remember what I said, when we were discussing *Hamlet?* I am sorry to be obliged to repeat it, and I ask you to forgive me for doing so; but this is the only point in which Americans can claim to be superior to Europeans, so far as art is concerned. . . . We are not exclusive like the Europeans; we try to be sensible to all the arts, to understand and admire everything. . . . I feel inclined to cry 'Land! land!' like Columbus, or θάλαττα, θάλαττα like the Greeks in Xenophon. Having nothing else to do, we have somehow drifted into a discussion of the beautiful. We had each one of us, at some time or other, thought about it in a leisure moment. And every one has given expression to just what was passing through his mind at the moment . . . and nonsense a good lot of it was! That our æsthetic admirations were all interested. . . . That machinery purified art from interests, and gave man liberty of taste! There appeared to be no chance of our understanding each other. Suddenly you, Rosetti, pronounced a word, a single word: 'limiting'; and that word shed on our paradoxes the ray of truth which cleared up our misunderstandings. Yes; man seeks for infinite beauty, for in the short hour at his disposal he aspires to live the maximum

of life. He aspires to, at the price of continual quarrelling; for are we not put into the world to quarrel? But interests bind him to the momentary and perishable forms in which every artist expresses himself, as if these were complete and absolute beauty. And so he disentangles himself, tries to burst and to cut the interests which twine like creepers round the trunk of art, overturns the barriers which prevent his soul from breathing as free as the wind on the ocean, seeks after liberty, which is the smoothest and quickest road to the ultimate goal of his long journey: Life!"

Cavalcanti's eloquence won all our hearts. It did not surprise me, who recognised in it that singular mixture of somewhat cloudy German philosophy, Oriental mysticism, and Latin love of the beautiful, the lucid, and the precise, with which my friend's mind was filled. When Cavalcanti had finished, we all turned to Rosetti, as if inviting him to answer. After a short pause, Rosetti replied slowly:

"Perhaps you are right. But I should like to ask you all one thing: Can you tell me whether Homer ever existed?"

CHAPTER IV

WHETHER Homer ever existed! Of course nobody answered his question.

Rosetti waited a while; then asked if any one of us had read Michel Bréal's book, *Pour mieux connaître Homère.* No one had. He then told us how Bréal stated in his book that Homer's world was a fantastic and purely conventional one, just like that of Ariosto; that his heroes and gods were mere literary types, on a par with the paladins of Boiardo,[1] and of Ariosto, or the shepherds of Theocritus and Virgil; that the epoch which produced the two epics must have possessed already a refined civilisation and an ancient culture, to have taken delight in stories of such exquisite workmanship, just as the fifteenth century delighted in Boiardo and in Ariosto.

"All the same," I objected, "the world which Homer describes is rude, savage, and primitive. He knows nothing of writing. Iron with him is a rare metal."

"But, as far as I can remember," answered Rosetti, "Ariosto is equally silent on the subject of money. His paladins scour the world without a sou in their pockets. Would you deduce from that, that in Ariosto's time money was unknown in Italy? Would you, an historian, use the *Furioso* as documentary evidence

[1] Boiardo, Matteo Maria, an Italian poet, 1434–1494, Author of *Orlando Innamorato.*

of the conditions of life in Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century? The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, just like the *Furioso*, transport us into the realms of fable."

"But how and by whom, then, was this imaginary world created?" I asked.

"I 'm not an expert in the subject, as you know," he answered. "I just reason the thing out by the light of common sense. . . . That light tells me that that imaginary world must have been created by men of letters and poets. . . . For it is a literary and poetical world. . . . Does it not seem so to you? Just like our poems of chivalry. In short, certain poets picked up in the streets the rude popular songs which transmitted, in a distorted form perhaps, the recollections of the events of long ago, just like the songs of the Carlovingian cycle in the Middle Ages. They introduced them into the houses of the rich Greek merchants of the Ægean and of Asia Minor, who themselves were consumed with the desire to translate quantity into quality. And so gradually, as one poet succeeded another, there was formed the 'genre' or 'class,' as well as a school or guild of poets which preserved and transmitted its rules, its types, and even its conventional language. For, non-expert as I am, I cannot help thinking that Bréal is right: that the so-called Homeric dialect was never spoken, but was a conventional, literary, perhaps half-archaic language, like that of the troubadours, manufactured by the poets, expressly to provide a vehicle of expression worthy of gods and heroes. What sort of gods and heroes would they have been, if they had talked as we talk in this smoking-room? And so poet succeeded to poet, until, one fine day, there appeared a genius, whose name was in fact—though you may n't believe it—Homer. And, what is still more extraordin-

ary, he was born, lived, died, and wrote his books just like every other author, with pen, ink, and paper, beginning with the first line, and putting a full-stop at the end; but infusing miraculous life into the conventional genre. Because the conventional is not necessarily always false, empty, and dead, as many think, and you, Cavalcanti, said a short while ago. No; it is an inner line isolated to make an outline. It limits, but it does not repress; and, what is more, it can be full of truth and full of life. Would you like a clearer instance? You, Alverighi, the other night reversed the current views on Greek sculpture. According to them, Greek sculpture is an ideal art; you say that it is a sensual art. I would rather say that it is neither ideal nor sensual; it is conventional. There are, thank heaven, a very large number of bodily forms which are beautiful. The Greeks chose some of them to represent the gods of Olympus. They therefore chose their models from life, so much so, that it is easy even to-day to find in the streets, alive, wearing clothes, and walking about, the models from which the Venuses, Junos, Apollos, and so forth were taken. . . . Are we not always holding up the Junoesque figure of a woman or the Apollo-like type of a man to admiration? These types, then, may be called conventional, but they are alive. For the rest, if there be any one who doubts that the genius of Homer was the mature fruit of a mature civilisation, let him read the Indian poems, *Firdusi*,[1] the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Chanson de Roland*, and then compare——"

This interesting digression had carried us far away from our main topic. Cavalcanti, however, expressed his approval with great vivacity, and said that, looked

[1] Firdusi is the name by which Abul Kasim Mansur, the great epic poet of Persia, is generally known. He lived 940–1020 A.D.

at in this light, the mystery surrounding the two solitary epics resolved itself in a miraculous way. Homer was the prime master of the art of composition! But when Cavalcanti had given full vent to his enthusiasm, Rosetti suddenly said:

"The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* together form the first great literary monument of our civilisation. How do you explain, then, the fact that, in face of this monument, men have been struck with a kind of sudden blindness? How can it ever have been believed that this work never had any author, was born without a father, mysteriously, spontaneously, on the lips of the vulgar? If archæologists affirmed that the Venus of Milo was never sculped by any individual, but was the product of a popular impulse tacking together fragments of different statues, and pretended to be able to dissect her and identify the bits, should we not clap them into an asylum? And yet has not exactly the same operation been attempted on the Homeric poems by the worthies who have dared to lacerate and unravel that marvellous canvas, the weaving of genius, in the quest for the tattered bits of the mysterious 'Ur-Ilias'? *Cose da pazzi*, as our doctor says. But these particular *pazzi* have not been shut up in an asylum; rather have they been salaried by their governments, appointed to lectureships in universities, crowned and acclaimed by Academies, venerated by the public as wells of wisdom."

We all laughed. Rosetti took a sip of champagne, relighted his cigar, and went on:

"So, then, we can state nothing categorically about the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. We do not know for certain whether they are fables or true histories, patchwork or masterpieces, the first enthusiasms of a barbarism in

its infancy or the ripest fruit of a mature civilisation; whether they were written in a spoken or in a literary language; not even—strangest of all—whether they were or were not written! Because it seems to me that Bréal is quite right. But the wiseacres go on, and will go on for a time yet, repeating that Homer never lived, or that Homer wrote his poem at a time when writing was unknown! And how are we to decide who is right and who is wrong? Do you hope, Ferrero, that some day or other some papyrus-worm will discover Homer's birth-certificate? Quarrelling, Signor Cavalcanti, serves no purpose at all, however true it be that we are put into the world to quarrel. There is no decisive argument. On both sides we get conjectures of more or less probability. Any one can form his own opinion on them. . . . In short, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have been read, translated, explained, emended, committed to memory, and adored for generations; and yet, they are two obscure enigmas, which every one can solve as he pleases. How do you explain this strange phenomenon, Signor Cavalcanti?"

He paused, but, as Cavalcanti did not answer, continued:

"May not the explanation be that the spirit can breathe freely through the Homeric poems, like the wind on the sea? You said that, for the real understanding and enjoyment of a work of art, we must liberate ourselves from those conventional criteria of the beautiful to which contemporaries must always more or less submit, because they are imposed by powerful interests. There is, then, no poet in the world whom we ought to enjoy better and more than Homer; for we do not even know for certain if and when and how the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed; how can we look at them

through the glasses of their contemporaries, in accordance with their conventional ideas of the beautiful, even supposing that they had any? Behold us then, free to judge and to enjoy disinterestedly, with what you, Cavalcanti, call the Way of Life lying plain and open before us; yet absolutely at a loss, and unable even to affirm with certainty that the poems which we read in print were ever written. Must we then conclude that we cannot distinguish a masterpiece from a patchwork, but can make the strangest and most contradictory pronouncements about it, because we lose ourselves in the labyrinth of reversible reasonings if we have not a standard of judgment which is obligatory and common, though conventional? Considered from this point of view, the Homeric question would no longer be merely a pastime for scholars; it would go to prove that a work of art is an enigma admitting of a thousand solutions, if we break out of the arbitrary rules and the conventional principles of the schools."

The objection was a substantial one. Cavalcanti hesitated, and said that the conventional part of the two poems was just the difficult part to understand.

"But it is different with the Andromache episode or the return of Ulysses," he concluded. "No one with an atom of taste and culture can pretend that these are not two rays of the beauty which never dies. Conventions are fleeting and perishable; but in every work of art there is—there must be—a spark of absolute, universal, and eternal beauty. Otherwise—as I said the other day, and I must apologise for repeating it,—how are we to explain the fact that there are many works of art at the sight of which, unprepared, ignorant, and unprejudiced as we are, we feel an overpowering impulse

to cry, 'How beautiful!', a shiver of immediate, free, and spontaneous pleasure?"

"And so," answered Rosetti at once, "let us shut our eyes and allow the current of our emotions to sweep us away. . . . But what was the answer Alverighi gave you the other night? That the beautiful was a pleasure without need, and on that account uncertain and fluctuating. A work may please me, and may not please others. It may please me to-day, and cease to please me to-morrow. Often I may be unable to say whether it pleases or displeases me. I have recourse to reason to clear up my doubts, and reason mocks me. Every work of art is an insoluble enigma, just like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. All these are mere truisms. No, we cannot enjoy a work of art if we are not in a position to feel that it is beautiful. And in order to feel that it is beautiful, to feel it really, surely, strongly, permanently, unhesitatingly, we must possess an unchallengeable model with which to compare it; either a single model,—what the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were to Virgil and to the ancients where epic poetry was concerned,—or different examples of more or less similar schools, as was the case with Italian painting for a long period of time. But a model we must have, and it will be as conventional and limited as the definition of the beautiful and the rules of art which it exemplifies; but as long as that model stands, it must be accepted as the unchallengeable standard.

"What is the history of art but a tale of incessant efforts and struggles to create, impose, and upset models? Many people nowadays are asking themselves why on earth Roman authors imitated Greek authors so pedantically; why all the literatures of modern times have spent so many centuries in recopying the Latins, who

themselves copied the Greeks. . . . But for a nation or for an epoch which sets to work to create a literature or an art, the main difficulty, the rock of stumbling which often nullifies the most protracted efforts, is not the production of men of genius. The creation or the discovery of the model by which to recognise what is beautiful, and what is not—that 's where the difficulty lies, that 's the real crux. Rome and Greece are so famous, because they created certain models and standards in literature, sculpture, and architecture which have done duty for many nations and many epochs. . . . If we examine our consciences, we shall realise without difficulty that a comparison is implied in every judgment we pass on a work of art. When we say that a work of art is very beautiful, or beautiful, or mediocre, or inferior, and we say it, not to give vent to the momentary pleasure, or ennui, which the work may have occasioned us, but to express a mature, firm, and sure conviction, we mean to say that that work of art is more or less beautiful than another or others which at that moment perform for us the office of models.

"What is it, in fact, which refines the tastes of individuals, nations, or generations? Acquaintance with a large number of works of art belonging to the same family; that is to say, comparison of them one with another. What is it which causes works of art to rise or fall in public estimation? The change of models. There were painters before Giotto's time who appeared perfect, and were models. When Giotto came, he became the model, and the others were discarded. But in Titian's and Raphael's times not even Giotto was any longer a model. Virgil strikes us as somewhat cold. Why? Because we compare him with Homer. If the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had been lost, the *Æneid* would

have been judged perfect. In short, to sum up: I don't think that you, Signor Cavalcanti, are right in comparing the traditions, the rules, the conventions, even the interests which limit the genius of artists and the taste of the public, to the creepers of your forests, which clasp and strangle the sturdy trees. No; to the mind, as to the body, every resistance, and therefore every limit, is a support, and every support is a resistance and therefore a limit. The fish swims against the current, and the bird and the aeroplane fly against the wind. The wind and the water resist, it is true, but they support. Man can only create what is new by overcoming the friction of a tradition, can only acquire liberty by shattering the bonds of a rule. Banish rules and traditions, and you can no longer have liberty or novelty. Absolute liberty is for the mind what a vacuum is for the bird: it cannot fly in it. . . . I could cite numberless instances to prove this. . . . Take fashion, for instance. . . . What is fashion but a conventional limitation? There are numberless modes of dress which are capable of attracting us; but, for six months, we agree to limit our choice to particular modes. Fashion, then, proves that even in times of anarchy like ours, a conventional rule of the beautiful, a law of taste and of choice, though it be subject to biannual change, is necessary if we want an art to be of service to the public."

"But fashion," interrupted Cavalcanti, "is a secondary art, to which machines and vast funds are indispensable. The great spiritual arts do not require so many interests and so much money to be called into play."

"True," answered Rosetti; "all the same, they require to be supported by the admiration and the money

of a coterie. And that coterie cannot support them, unless it accepts without discussion the principles on which they rest. Cast your eyes round, and tell me: Is not the malady from which the arts are suffering in our times simply this and nothing else—the lack of rules, principles, and limits? To-day neither art nor public need take account of any court, or aristocracy, or church, or censor, or critics with their pedagogic rules. We have emancipated ourselves from the laws of shame and decency, we have rebelled against God, the king, syntax, prosody, and common-sense! So, Long live Liberty! is the cry. And public and artists alike ought to take advantage of this liberty to carry their daring to the furthest point. Instead of that, each frightens the other, scared at feeling themselves in a vacuum without support. The public waits for the spirit to blow, ready to bend before it like a reed before the wind. But alas! the spirit cannot bring itself to blow either from the east or from the west. In vain the painters, sculptors, musicians, decorators, furniture-makers, poets, novelists are all alert to find out what the public, which wants nothing at all, wants. They ask themselves in bewilderment: What subject, what style, what genre, what school—in a word, what model—are we to choose? Our epoch indicates every model as the right one, which is equivalent to saying that it indicates no model at all. And then? Then the clever ones learn the art of acquiring honours and riches by cheating the world. The crazy and the charlatans try to intimidate the public with their daring effronteries, forcing it to accept as beautiful, in the name of progress, what is new, what does not resemble any known model, as if even art were under the obligation of always turning out new things, and not only beautiful things.

"Artists of talent and sincerity are not rare. But each one wants to have his own formula of art, and proclaims to the world that it alone is the true and perfect one. And no one is ever at a loss for arguments to support his formula, which appears sound enough as long as he is left to himself and no neighbour comes along and upsets it by proving that the real and perfect formula is the exact opposite, *i. e.*, of course, his own. Every now and then some great genius comes to light in this Babel, and, if he succeeds in imposing himself, in understanding himself, and in making himself intelligible to a public of sufficient size to support him, for a certain time at any rate, he can do some really fine things, create real masterpieces, and turn his unrestricted liberty to good account. But they are masterpieces floating in space, like those isolated, wandering icebergs which the water supports while it eats away their foundations. At any moment they may turn over, and they often bring destruction to the navigators whose path they cross. In short, no epoch has revived so many old formulæ and tried so many new formulæ of beauty, only to end by making this poor world of ours more ugly than it was. For the epochs in which the models, owing to their excessive number, are jumbled up and confused, and with them the precise and delicate standards of tragedy, comedy, epic poetry, sumptuousness, elegance, grace, magnificence, and so on; these epochs are able to taste and to enjoy only the violent, the difficult, the gaudy, the massive, the rare, the strange, the abnormal, the amazing—the dramas which make one's flesh creep, the farces which make one's jaws ache, the literature which is obscure and overloaded with erudition, the lyric poetry which one has to read with an encyclopædia in one's hands, the glittering and dazzling decorations,

the buildings which bewilder with their size and the richness of their marbles.

"We laughed when we were told that the time would come when New York would seem to the eyes of the world more beautiful than Paris. But take care! America is richer than Europe, and can, if she likes, sink larger sums in the construction of vast buildings, full of the latest luxuries and inventions, like the new station of the Pennsylvania Railway in New York. Suppose structures of that stamp became the culmination of beauty for our lack-model times? Suppose the Americans did in the modern world what the Romans did in the ancient; when they ended by smothering the monuments of Greek architecture with mass, weight, and richness? I may be wrong, but a rose seems to me more beautiful than the most beautiful orchid. But orchids are scarce, and last a long time, while roses are common and live only a few hours; and on that account orchids are more highly prized than roses. Rarity, which is a quantitative conception, creeps into the judgments passed on beauty; consequently it defiles and falsifies them, since beauty is pure quality. I will go further, and affirm that the only criterion which serves to compare, as well as may be, one form of beauty with another is this: An art or a school or a style is more perfect, the closer it approximates to the state of pure quality: the less recourse it has to quantitative elements to awake admiration and to give pleasure. But these are subtle considerations; and the public, especially nowadays, have too many other things to bother about! And so the public, poor things, do what they can; but except on the rare occasions when they are convulsed with admiration by a kind of contagious frenzy, they cannot

arrive at a definite opinion in this Babel. They are diffident and indifferent. They are afraid of mistaking a mystification for a masterpiece, or a masterpiece for a mystification. As a rule they follow the drum, until, afraid of going too far, they do their best to forget what they have admired, and, when they can, get themselves out of their difficulty by saying that a work of art is 'interesting.' Have you ever considered how we abuse that adjective? 'Interesting' is a neutral word, a refuge midway between the beautiful and the ugly; it is a useful loophole for an epoch which, having no *étalon de mesure*, as they say in France, cannot, and does not dare to, say decisively: This is beautiful, this is ugly."

I smiled at these words, and interrupted Rosetti to explain that the word "interesting" had been for me too a useful loophole in America, every time I was asked my opinion about things which I did not feel myself competent to judge, or which, at first sight at any rate, did not seem so wonderful to me as to my kind hosts. I always got out of the difficulty by declaring a thing to be "very interesting" or *muy interesante*. But, having once interrupted Rosetti, I seized the opportunity to make a much wider digression, to which I was impelled by my meditations of the preceding evening, and my philosophical talk that morning with Cavalcanti.

I said: That the elementary definition of the beautiful, from which every art starts, must be prescribed and imposed by an act of will, seems to me true enough. On the other hand, it does not seem to me that we can come to a halt, as you do, at the act of will, as if it were the *ultima Thule* or 'Pillars of Hercules' of human thought. . . . We must take a further step and decide this other point: whether things become beautiful because, and at the moment that, we would have them so;

or whether we would have them so, because they really are beautiful. Here we have, it seems to me, the crux of the whole matter; and on this depends the answer to the question, Whether you were right at first, when you demolished the whole world bit by bit before our eyes, or whether you are right now, when you are trying to stick the bits together again with the help of will. If things qualify for the epithet 'beautiful' merely because we would have them so, you were right in saying that the spectacle of the world is but the magic-lantern of interests; and that shoemaker in the Place Vendôme Alverighi told us of was right; not to mention Vedantism. In that case the variety of the world is an illusion; action and effort are vain things. But if the variety of the world is the salt of life, the principle of progress, the fount of felicity, you must admit that our æsthetic judgments cannot be only the effect of extrinsic forces, which operate on our passions as on wax; such as the interests you enumerated the other day, such as the conventional rules, the arbitrary limitations, and the prejudices which we impose by all the means at our command to make others fall into line with ourselves; such as fashion, and suggestion. No; by the side of these extrinsic forces there must be ranged an intrinsic, incoercible force, which now seconds the extrinsic forces, now resists them as the anchor and the hawser resist the violence of the waves; which now accepts as beautiful what interests and conventions and fashion declare to be such, now resists, grumbles, and rebels. If not, why should Apollo have incited us to restrain the Titans of iron? We have been discussing for days past to what extent we ought to resist machinery, at what point to decline the abundance which it showers upon us; but could we resist machinery and decline that abundance,

if it did not endeavour to make us admire as beautiful, things which are really ugly, and as good, actions which are really bad, and if our consciences did not drive us to rebel, even if we do sometimes, like my wife, put a rather unnecessary warmth into our protests? It is clear, then, that, having arrived in our researches at the act of will, we cannot stop there. We must probe deeper, right down to the profound intrinsic force which gives the impulse to the act of will."

Rosetti looked at me, and then said slowly:

"You, then, are not content to feel an inner impulse towards a form of beauty. You want to turn yourself inside out, to find what is the arm and the force which gives you that impulse. . . ." He paused, and then went on: "But suppose it were impossible? Suppose man were so constituted by nature or by God, whichever you like, that he could not at the same time feel the impulse, and turn himself inside out to see the mysterious arm which was impelling him? could not hear the voice which urged him on behind his back, and turn round and face the speaker? Suppose the arm dropped, and the voice stopped at the precise moment at which the man turned? Suppose the man were Orpheus, and could not rescue his Eurydice from the infernal regions, could not find the path which leads to truth, beauty, and virtue, except on condition that he did not once turn round?"

He paused, with his eyes fixed on me. I was about to answer, when he drew out his watch, and said:

"Why, it 's midnight. Time does fly. Suppose we turn in, and continue to-morrow; that is to say, unless these discussions bore you too much—for there 's a lot still to be said."

We agreed, and separated for the night.

CHAPTER V

NEXT Tuesday should bring us to the gates of the old world. We were due to enter the Mediterranean towards evening. That day, then, would see us enter on a solemn stage in our long journey: a solemn, and a welcome one too, because it was the last. From the Straits of Gibraltar, the *Cordova* would take but three days to reach her goal. But Cavalcanti and I did not even mention, that morning, our impending passage of the Straits; we spent nearly the whole morning, which was rainy and grey, discussing on the promenade deck, our conversation of the evening before, and the objection I had propounded. Cavalcanti expressed his approval of it. I made it clearer and more precise—I had given much thought to it—and added that Rosetti seemed to me to be on the brink of becoming involved in a fatal contradiction. He had asserted that Beauty must have something conventional about it; must be, consequently, a human, momentary, and fleeting opinion, as were institutions and customs to many philosophers of the eighteenth century, without absolute and eternal foundations. But his mystic comparison of man with Orpheus was doubtless intended to convey the suggestion that the principles of art were almost too sacred for discussion. I intended to rely on this contradiction and to use it as a lever to make Rosetti retract his words. But Rosetti did not leave his

cabin that morning, so we had to be patient and wait. I exchanged a few words with the Admiral before luncheon. He told me that Mrs. Feldmann was slightly better, but had begun to concoct a string of fantastic plans and suppositions; that she had sent for him four times in the course of the night and morning to communicate them to him. At luncheon Señora Yriondo turned up for the first time, a definite proof that her husband must be gradually convincing himself of his mistake, and getting well. We talked about Gibraltar, and Rosetti promised to continue the discussion after the siesta.

About half-past four o'clock Cavalcanti and I found ourselves already pacing the lower deck, talking and stopping every now and then to look at the sea and the land. For we were in sight of land. At noon we had reached 35° 7′ lat. and 6° 53′ long., and were now steaming full speed towards the Pillars of Hercules. Far away on the starboard hand we could descry through the mist the low, undulating coast of Morocco. Before us, dark and comparatively close, loomed the mountain sentinels at the gates through which one day Prometheus and Vulcan had escaped from the ancient history of the world. Close by the land, the ocean, which had appeared so sleepy, deserted, and monotonous the day before, now seemed suddenly to wake up and become clear under the influence of a brisk breeze which grappled with the mist, stirred the surface of the sea, and opened immense blue rents in the grey veil of rain which that morning had covered the face of the world. The breeze afforded us the novel spectacle of a sea lashed into fury in the full light of the sun. Far as eye could reach, right away to Morocco, to the mountains of the Straits, to the thick mist which

shrouded the ocean on the port hand, leaped up from the azure depths of the sea long green breakers, like liquid walls of emerald and gold, hung glittering for an instant, then broke and fell back on themselves in a hundred cascades of silver, only to rise again in green and gold: an unceasing strife which threatened us from all sides with attacks which meant no harm. For the ship cleft the waves with her stem, and crossed the tortured sea, as erect and firm as if it were a placid lake, without pitching and with scarcely a roll. Even the most delicate of the passengers could watch the storm without discomfort.

At last, towards five o'clock, while a knot of us were looking through our glasses at the land we were approaching and at Cape Spartel, Rosetti suddenly appeared, smiling and smoking a cigar. I at once broached the old subject, determined to get Rosetti to entangle himself in his contradiction.

"You say to me: This work of art is beautiful, because it resembles a certain model. But another question at once arises out of this answer: The model being really beautiful, why is it so? You will tell me that it is because tradition, a school, public opinion, the 'great will' of my epoch, imposes it on me as such. But that answer does not settle the question. Tradition, a school, public opinion, the will of my epoch, may be mistaken. One can say truly that they may now judge the same work of art to be beautiful which at another time they will judge to be ugly. They must be wrong one way or the other. If, then, I want to be certain of not making a mistake, I must be able to judge the models, to know whence springs, and of what consists, that mysterious beauty which exists and must exist in the model, if the model is to

exert any imperative authority over me, you, and every one else."

"From God," interrupted Rosetti, suddenly and concisely.

"From God?" I exclaimed, for I did not expect that answer from Rosetti. "Yes!" I added, smiling, "God has been for many centuries the mystical fount of values; but . . ."

I paused, thinking I had said enough to make my meaning clear.

"But?" asked Rosetti, as if he did not understand.

"But, Signor Rosetti. . . . You know, better than I do, what century we are living in. . . . After Kant . . . and the *Critique of Pure Reason*. . . . After the French Revolution . . ."

At that moment, three waves, one after the other, crashed and broke with a tremendous roar along the sides of the *Cordova*. We stopped for a few moments to gaze on the stormy picture of emerald and gold, sapphire and silver. The clamour and uproar increased as the gates of the old world gradually drew nearer, and we could see the mountain barriers more and more clearly. But to westward the horizon was clouding over; the great blue rents in the sky were closing up, and a veil was falling over the brightness of the day. When we again began our walk, Rosetti turned to me, and said with a grimace:

"Criticism! That 's a word I don't like. A Greek word Germanised! A Levantine and Teutonic hybrid!"

My surprise increased. I beat up some scattered reminiscences of my philosophical studies, and was beginning a defence of philosophical criticism; but Rosetti did not let me go on for long. He caught me by the arm and interrupted quickly:

"I know what you are going to say. Modern unbelief may be an evil. But, if we had not let our thoughts engage in all sorts of heroic enterprises, to the extent of destroying God while pretending to prove His existence, our minds would be still in a state of infancy, and we should be to-day at the stage the Moslems have reached. We should not have discovered America, and we should not find ourselves here, in this floating castle, engaged in a tranquil discussion, after the manner of demi-gods, as Alverighi said when we were down at the equator.—By the bye, he 's not on view to-day; where can he have got to?—That 's the reason why, whatever be the authority that asserts: 'This is beautiful,' we thank it kindly for the information, and at once say we want to know why it is beautiful."

Now was the time to unmask my batteries.

"Exactly," I answered; "for if you assert that the principles of the beautiful are all arbitrary and conventional, of human manufacture and therefore momentary and fleeting, how can you pretend that man should adore them as if they were sacred principles, and find fault with him for wishing to discover their real cause and significance? Why, they are his own manufacture, and belong to him."

At that moment we reached the fo'c'sle gangway: on the starboard hand we descried Cape Spartel, so close that we could see the long white breakers beating at its feet.

Rosetti stopped, gazed, and said meditatively:

"The ancients had a story that Antæus was buried at the foot of Cape Spartel, in those caves there . . . Antæus, the symbol of the indomitable energy of man. . . . But why make him die on the shores of the Atlantic?" Then, turning to me, instead of answering

me, he said: "So for centuries and centuries God was the eternal, unshaken support of contingent things, the unconditioned necessity to which the human mind climbed up the infinite ladder of causes; the guide, the rule, the supreme measure. But man was not permitted to turn round and look at His face! He Himself had forbidden him to do so: *Vide bis posteriora mea, faciem autem meam videre non poteris.* But man is an inquisitive and unruly creature. He began to squint out of the corner of his eye, to speculate about the essence and the attributes of God. He became entangled, was n't quite sure whether he did or did not see something; tried to see more clearly, and turned his head a little farther round; became still further entangled in a regular thicket of subtle reasonings. At last one day, wishing to find out whether what he thought he saw was the face of God, whether what he thought he heard was the voice of God, he turned right round, and there he saw—Kant! The divine face had disappeared. He did not even see, like Moses, the shoulders of God. The infinite spaces, in which the divine voice had resounded, were still."

This Biblical speech was so little expected from the mouth of Rosetti, that I could not restrain myself from interrupting.

"But do you mean to impute modern unbelief to Kant? It springs from quite other causes. You said so yourself just now."

At that moment, the electric lamps lit up above our heads, shining dimly in the lingering daylight. We had now entered the mouth of the Straits, and were steaming through the twilight over the dark, broken waters under a lowering and stormy sky. We were skirting the coasts of Europe, which we could see

vaguely and confusedly through the gathering darkness. Morocco on the other side had disappeared from view. Rosetti paused an instant, looking at the lights; then, turning to me, said with a sudden digression:

"We are of one mind, then. The French Revolution was the Titans' fresh attack on Olympus. It was the most formidable act of will in history. It was the act of will which reversed practically all the old *étalons de mesure*, the tables of values which man had worshipped for centuries. It was the pitched battle fought by man with God, to turn Him off His throne. For centuries man had been harassing with guerrilla bands of philosophers and scientists the communications between earth and heaven; and lo! all at once the battalion struck camp and marched straight to the assault. And God was reduced to the form of a philosophical phantasm. On the steps of His throne sat the human mind, like the 'shogun' at the foot of the Mikado's throne in Japan a century ago, in appearance a minister, but in reality sovereign and supreme motive of life in all its branches: of art, of morality, of law, of education, of politics, and, most important of all, of itself. For gradually, feeling itself to be the motive of everything and feeling itself no longer moved by any superior impulse, the human mind fell a prey to a sublime and insistent delirium. It longed to study itself in motion and to see its own face without a looking-glass, so to speak. The ultimate effect of this delirious 'shogun' government we have seen during this long voyage. Having nothing else to do, we have discussed a few serious topics. We have tried to find out whether New York is beautiful or ugly, but Æsthetics could not tell us. We wanted to know what progress was, but failed to reach any conclusion;

whether machinery was useful or harmful, whether science was true or false, whether riches were a good or a bad thing, whether America was superior or inferior to Europe; and we made no headway at all. Some said Yes, some said No; on all sides reversible arguments. The mind turns round to see its own face; goes on turning, turning, turning till it becomes dizzy."

Rosetti's train of thought, like a snake wriggling through the grass, wound in and out between the sarcasms of a subtle irony. Despairing of ever succeeding in striking him a blow home, I tried once more to bar his retreat:

"But let us keep to the point; don't let us get off the line. Do you, or do you not, think that what we call the Beautiful is but a matter of human opinion, changeable from time to time and from place to place?"

He nodded, adding quickly:

"And not Beauty only; Truth and Morality as well."

My adversary was extending, instead of closing, his ranks to meet my attack. I hesitated a moment in face of this unexpected move; then decided to strike where I had originally aimed.

"Well, then, I repeat: How can you blame man for searching for the cause of all these diverse and changeable opinions? Because there surely must be a cause. If you admitted that art was an emanation from God, I should understand. For the rest, you yourself the other day proved to us that what impels us to admire a work of art is one or more interests. What else have you done, then, but turn yourself round and try to discover the reason why what seems beautiful to me seems ugly to you or *vice-versa?* And if you turned yourself, why would you have the others to 'Eyes front!' like soldiers on parade?"

Rosetti looked at me with a smile.

"You don't understand, then?" he asked.

"No, I don't understand."

"Don't you either, Cavalcanti?"

He took me by the arm, signed to Cavalcanti to follow him, and conducted us to the side of the ship. In the troubled waters of the Straits, there danced round the ship a great shoal of porpoises. They threw up their snouts as if looking at us, then dived, and reappeared leaping, twisting, shooting, like a flash of silver through the dark waves; graceful mountebanks of the sea, who followed the *Cordova* to show off their agile and nimble tricks before our eyes. The bulwarks of the third-class quarters were thronged with passengers who laughed and screamed at the spectacle. Rosetti himself seemed to be interested in the graceful movements of the fish. Then he went on:

"Consider the Atlantic, which empties itself through this channel into the Mediterranean. How the waters of the limitless ocean fume between the mountain confines of their passage! And yet, is not this stream between the two mountains, which we are cleaving, that same infinite ocean which we have ploughed for two weeks, without reaching its end? And here it is, drawing itself in, chafing and fuming because it cannot all at once empty itself into the Mediterranean through the narrow channel. Well, this channel is the image of the human mind, itself the narrow channel of an infinite ocean. Beauty is an infinite thing, as you have said, Cavalcanti; and not Beauty only, but Truth, and Good as well. And the human mind is limited. Each man, each school, each epoch can understand only one particle of the Truth; can create and understand only a few amongst the infinite forms of the Beautiful; can

practise only a few of the countless human virtues, just as in each instant of time only one wave of the ocean can empty itself through this channel into the Mediterranean.

"I cannot form any conception of the universe, except by picturing it to myself as a reality which I call infinite, meaning that it is all-surpassing; and we tiny human creatures, lost in it, can discover, perceive, and comprehend but the minutest particles of it from time to time. Certainly from amongst all these infinite forms of life man has no intrinsic motive for choosing one more than another. That 's what you said, Cavalcanti; and I think you were right. But embrace them all he cannot, because his mind is not capacious enough; and so he must choose, even with no motive to guide him; that is to say, he must limit himself. A contradictory necessity, you were saying, Cavalcanti. How can he choose without a motive? And yet he must. And in this unavoidable contradiction lies perhaps the secret cause of that eternal struggle between the divine and the human, between the finite and the infinite, between the contingent and the absolute, between the fleeting and the eternal, between the conventional and the imperative, which torments and will torment the world.

"Beauty, truth, and virtue are absolute, eternal, divine, infinite, imperishable. There's no doubt on that point. It 's useless to sophisticate. The True is true, and cannot be false. The Beautiful is beautiful, and cannot be ugly. The Good is good, and cannot be bad. These are the axioms, so to speak, of life. If we do not admit them, we cannot live, just as we cannot study geometry without those other axioms; you know which I mean! But the limits which, owing to the

narrowness of his mind, of the channel through which this infinity has to pour, man has to impose upon himself in order to understand any part of it, are contingent, momentary, human, arbitrary, conventional. They depend on circumstances. They are prescribed and abrogated by those same mundane interests about which we have talked so much. They can change their position, remove, withdraw, approach, expand, or shrink. But abolished they cannot ever be—that's where you went wrong, Cavalcanti,—for, if they could, the human mind, robbed of support, would totter, lose its way in the unlimited, misunderstand and become hopelessly confused. Look at the matter from this point of view, and how clearly you will see all the vast travail of the world and of history, which is nothing else than the tragic and eternal travail caused by this limitation, arbitrary and yet so necessary as it is!

"For what reason has the world been since the beginning of time, and is destined always to be, the scene of a war of doctrines, religions, sects, principles, ideas, civilisations, laws, classes, and states? For what reason do men, in every one of the countless contests which inflame the world, hurl themselves, one on the other, with arms in their hands, or insults on their lips, or hatred in their hearts, all of them equally convinced that they are right, that they are in the truth, that their cause is the just one? Where breeds that ancient 'Mediterranean fever,' which Alverighi fancied he could escape by emigrating, that eternal spirit of discord among men who all, wherever they are, only desire exactly the same things? Whence arises history's hideous misunderstanding, which can never be cleared up? How is it to be explained that a being equipped with reason, like man, nevertheless in matters of such

moment recognises no arbiter but the sword? Why is war the supreme ordeal of conflicting rights and principles, and why has no Areopagus or tribunal or court of justice—not even The Hague tribunal—been discovered before which appeals can be brought against its blind and bloody judgments? How comes it that every change in place and time may cause beauty to become ugliness, truth to become falsehood, virtue to become vice; and yet no one can say in which of these places and times man was right, when and where he began to go wrong? Why is the work of man an immense Sisyphus—toil which every generation begins afresh, dreaming every time of finally discovering truth, beauty, and virtue imperishable? From this lofty point of view look down, and understand! . . .

"All men, all times, all nations are imprisoned in the limited and conventional principles of Truth, Morality, and Beauty in which they have been forced to shut themselves up. Shut up in these, they cannot see, in the absence of appropriate models, that the principles in which others shut themselves up are but different forms of beauty, truth, and virtue. They mistake for ugliness, falsehood, and vice, the other particles of that same infinite good which they can enjoy only after their own lights. They pity, hate, or despise as barbarians, aliens, and inferiors, all men who are outside their own prison. They even do their best to seize hold of them and drag them into their own prison, like the Cyclops into his cave, when all the time a mysterious impulse is driving them to break out of it themselves. Every human principle—we must never forget this—is limited, and therefore exhaustible; it must therefore be renewed periodically.

"The infinite presses on the narrow channel of our

minds, just as the waves of the Atlantic storm through these straits through which we are steaming. It forces us to press on from one truth, one beauty, one virtue to another, without taking breath, without respite or repose. But the passage spells bewilderment, suffering, and delirium to us. For round the prison of an exhausted principle echo the voices of angels and demons. The angels' songs tell us that outside extend the mystic regions of the Absolute, where man can rove in freedom, sleep and awake again in fields which have no paths or boundaries, but flowers without number blossoming in never-failing spring. . . . The demons for their part whisper to the prisoner that his prison was built by iniquity, by stupidity, and by the tyranny of his fellows. Dare he only break out, and he will be able to re-form the world, and to construct it without limitations, principles, and conventions; and, enthroned like the Minos of a new universal judgment in the midst of history, he will be able to summon before his tribunal all the states, arts, religions, doctrines, laws, and customs of the world. The prisoner, hearing the angels' songs and the demons' whispers, flies into a passion, raves, shakes the bars of his prison, becomes restless; and instead of abandoning himself to the force which impels him to wish for the Good, the Beautiful, and the True, he turns round to see who is impelling him and who is speaking to him, at the risk of having to stop every moment. And in the end he succeeds in discovering the reason for the limitations in multiplex mundane interests: in the imposition of an authority, in the force of a tradition. And then he mistakes this momentary and fleeting limit for the very essence of Art, of Truth, and of Morality. Interest is the rotten beam with which modern philosophy tries to shore up

the shattered structure of our convictions. But it 's all to no purpose. With the world reduced to a system of interests, man rebels against all authorities, traditions, and rules."

"But that road leads us straight to state beauty," answered Cavalcanti with a smile. "We shall have to have public schools of art, and a state sculpture, a state literature, and a state theatre, like the *Comédie Française.*"

"Certainly," answered Rosetti with a rather disingenuous air. "Every model, precisely because it is arbitrary, must be imposed by an authority; by a social order, by a school, by a religion, by the state. If not, every individual will seek to provide himself with his own model, and we have seen what will happen then, or rather, nobody can tell what will happen."

At this point, we separated to get ready for dinner.

CHAPTER VI

AT dinner Cavalcanti said to Alverighi: "Where have you been all day? What an opportunity you have missed."

"We are at the gates of Europe," answered the other laughingly, "and I 've got my business to attend to. We 've been writing the whole day, Signor Vazquez and I, at our report for the Paris bankers."

As a matter of fact, the whole of dinner, he talked almost exclusively to Signor Vazquez, in a low voice, in Spanish, every now and then drawing papers out of one pocket or the other, showing them to his friend, or scribbling on them in pencil. Consequently he paid but little attention to the remarks with which Cavalcanti resumed the morning's discussion.

"You and I agree, then, Rosetti. Art is always based on some limited and, in that sense, conventional principle. Every now and then some great artist may be privileged to create principles which are peculiar to himself, and may have enough influence to impose them on his contemporaries and on posterity; Dante, Michael Angelo, Victor Hugo, Rodin, for instance. But they are few in number. And not art only, what 's more; law for instance, as well. Ferrero the other evening treated law rather cavalierly. But I was thinking only this morning: Are not law, legality, and order only limited conventions? There would be no

end to the disputes and doubts about the just and the unjust, if an act of what you call the 'great will'—God or the State—did not prescribe and impose limited and conventional principles of justice, which, so long as they are in force, serve as an indisputable criterion of right and of wrong. To us it seems strange that in absolute monarchies people should have recognised the right to govern in the king for the sole reason that he was supposed to be the son of his father. But what about the principles on which a parliamentary régime is based? Are they in any degree more reasonable? Does a man or a party become capable of governing a state, only because the majority of the members of the Parliament say that he or it is? But every man and every party considers him and itself in all good faith worthy to govern; and a rule of choice must needs be fixed, unless the question is to be left to pistols to decide. And what about diplomacy? What do we diplomatists do but quibble and split hairs about certain conventional principles—international law, to give them a fine name until an act of will, that is to say, a war, imposes new ones on us? It 's the same with etiquette, ceremonial, the code of chivalry, decorations, titles, the academies. . . . We agree then. Nevertheless, Signor Rosetti, permit me to remind you that all these principles, being, as they are, limited, exhaust themselves, and therefore must be renewed every now and again. . . I 'm only repeating your own words. . . . Every nation, then, must revive from time to time its own formulæ of æsthetics, morals, and law. Very well; may not that be the reason why every now and then we yield to the temptation, as you expressed it, of looking round to see the force which impels us? Our epoch is more plastic than the an-

cients'. Why? Compare demoniacal civilisations like our own, which, I confess, abuse philosophy and criticism, with the stagnation of Moslem society, in which the critical and philosophical spirit has failed to take root. In short, the critical spirit, and the philosophy which is its organ, seem to be the primary source of progress."

"They are, if progress exists," said Rosetti, rising from his seat. "But only think how long we have discussed it, without reaching any definite conclusion."

Dinner was over. We put on our coats and hats and went on deck for a smoke. The sailors told me that we were now well into the Mediterranean; but the night was so dark that we had to take the assertion on trust. However, it was not particularly cold, and, with our coats on, we, that is to say, Rosetti, Cavalcanti, and I, could enjoy walking up and down and talking. Alverighi had gone off with Vazquez. Cavalcanti continued his discussion, observing that it was undoubtedly difficult to define progress; but that, in his opinion, no one could doubt that the plasticity of our epoch was a virtue compared with the rigidity of ancient civilisations. Consequently we were right in defining progress as the facility we had acquired of creating and embracing new truths and forms of beauty, new ideas and principles of morality; thus increasing the variety of the world, which Rosetti had declared to be the very reason of progress.

"I think your definition is right," answered Rosetti slowly, "if the new forms and principles supplement the old ones; but not if they supplant them like old servants past work."

Rosetti's answer was not clear, and we asked him to explain it.

"If progress is not an illusion, it should be something, a force or a law, under whose influence the world, like wine, improved with time. Now I can only conceive the possibility of time improving the world, if I suppose man to discover and create unintermittently from generation to generation new Beauties, new Virtues, and new Truths; with the result that each succeeding generation, provided it is able to preserve all or most of the models which its predecessors created, can be sure of possessing and knowing an ever-increasing number of them. That is the only way, so far as I can see, in which we can weld quantity and quality together in the principle of progress. Why is it that, to apply Horace's words to ideas, sentiments, and forms of art, *Multa renascentur quæ jam cecidere?* How, to quote an instance, did it come about that Theocritus came to life again in Virgil, Theocritus and Virgil in Tasso and in Guarino,[1] and all four of them in the French pastoral poets of the eighteenth century? Or for what reason did so large a part of the ancient Hebrew morality find a new lease of life in the earliest Protestant sects? Because an exhausted principle is like a stretch of used up soil; it can regain life and strength, provided that it still retains some spark of vigour. Consequently, the later a man's birth is postponed, the brighter will be his prospects in this vale of tears; for he will find a greater number of models and principles lying dormant in tradition, and only waiting to be awakened. You will say that we could never build again the Parthenon or the Pantheon or Siena Cathedral or the Campo Santo at Pisa or the Palazzo Vecchio or the Colonnade of St. Peter's. Much less could we reproduce the cities of the ancients, or the Roman Empire,

[1] Guarino (1537–1612), an Italian poet, author of the *Pastor Fido*.

or Christianity, or the French Revolution. But we can understand, admire, study, gain inspiration from, all these movements, just as we understand and enjoy Greek and Chinese pottery, though we cannot reproduce it. We have succeeded in transfusing into modern nations the patriotism, the civic spirit, the heroism of the ancient city; that respect for law and that hatred of oppression which the jurists have instilled drop by drop into the turbulent blood of our race; the mercy, the sweetness, the horror of cruel amusements which Christ taught; the sentiment of the rights of man erected by the philosophy of the eighteenth century and by the French Revolution. Progress then does not consist only in creating new truths, new arts, or new virtues, but also in preserving them from generation to generation—and it lies with you historians, Ferrero, to preserve them—as far, at least, as it is possible to do so. Preservation, then, and not destruction, as most people think nowadays, ought to be a necessary condition of progress. For, if the old principles are discarded, we get a change, but not a gain or progress, as there is no way of proving that the new are any better than the old."

"But in that case," objected Cavalcanti, "in order to progress it is necessary, not to impose limits on ourselves, but to enlarge the limits, the straits, the channel as much as possible."

"Naturally; because the infinite presses on the narrow channel of our minds and forces it. We must enlarge the limits; but not destroy the banks of the channel."

"Granted," replied Cavalcanti. "But now you 're coming over to my side. I say that we ought, in the interests of the progress of art, to do our best to be

sensible to every art, and every school; to expand to the utmost our faculty for comprehension and enjoyment, by all means at our command, including even æsthetics."

"With discretion and discernment, I repeat, as I said the other day. . . . I agree that we should preserve and get to know as many models as possible. But we must not create new ones in too large numbers and in too much of a hurry, nor must we change them too often. We must not make nine-pins of them, and amuse ourselves with knocking them over and putting them up again, nor must we discover every six months *the* incomparable model, which is going to reform the taste of the world, nor imagine that a work of art can or ought to become a model, only because to-day it gives us pleasure, or even sends us into ecstasies. Above all must we not confuse our models; not compare a drama to a lyric model, a piece of sculpture to a musical model. The beautiful owes its existence to a limitation. Ergo, no model is valid for works, and no comparisons are possible between works, which do not start from the same original and limited definition of beauty. You must compare one work of classical architecture with another, one of gothic with another, one of baroque with another; not baroque with gothic or with classical. Keep your eye on æsthetics, then, and do not take any notice of Alverighi when he says that art is only an expensive enjoyment like champagne and havanas. Art, too, has her 'masses' and her 'classes.' There is an insignificant, fleeting kind of art, whose purpose it is to entertain and to serve as a pastime, such as an amusing comedy, the novel one reads in the train or on a country holiday, a popular concert, the pattern of my coat. . . . This kind of art,

as well as any other, has its own task to perform. We must, then, allow men the same right in connection with it as Alverighi claimed for our century in connection with all the arts; I mean every one's right to enjoy the beautiful in his own way. But there are also the models; the masterpieces which have given light, sound, body, or speech to the different principles of the beautiful which have been discovered in the course of centuries; which serve as standards of comparison and measures of judgment, and therefore keep beauty alive by refining men's perception of the gradations of the beautiful. In the case of these—we must always remember this—art is no longer a pastime. It is a limit, like morality; one of the many limits which make the world infinitely diverse and varied, and which are consequently the essence of life and of progress. In dealing with these I would ask our epoch not to announce to the world every six months a fresh reading of them, a fresh interpretation of them, not to hold them up as a mirror to its own vanity, every one flattering himself that he admires them in a way of his own which is more intelligent than that of his fellows. No; the models must be admired with modesty, with disinterestedness, and with a lively sense of national discipline. The new, especially those which come from foreign parts, must be joined on to the old with a certain considered discretion, so that the result may not be a heterogeneous Pantheon of ill-matched and incoherent gods. Let us not forget that it is one thing to enjoy a work of art, another to canonise it as a model. The pleasure which a work of art causes us is often changeable, uncertain, personal, alloyed. The function of the model, on the other hand, is stable. In conclusion, let us take care not to lose our way in

the unlimited, through too ardent a desire to progress! Because—I think I have said it already, but *repetita juvant*—if we bundle too many different models together, or if we change them too often, or if they get mixed up, they all become useless to us. We lose the measure of judgment and consequently the criterion of choice. We are reduced to accepting everything without distinction—as is the case, I am afraid, with the Americans now and again . . . More, but not too many, principles; that seems to me to be the rule of artistic progress."

An objection had presented itself to me some time before; so, as soon as Rosetti had finished, I said:

"But would one expect morality also to progress, when diverse principles and models are commingled, however discreetly? I doubt it. Are not the epochs, the civilisations, the nations of the greatest moral strength those which prescribe, by a vigorous act of will, one sole virtue as the supreme standard of merit—as chivalrous heroism was to the Japanese at one time, charity and humility to the Christians of the first centuries, civic self-sacrifice to the Romans, and so on, —and from it deduce limited but imperative rules of conduct, which, whether good or bad, just or unjust, are put in force, and nobody dares open their lips? In those epochs, on the other hand, in which many moral principles are commingled, does not the diversity of principles confuse men's ideas and emasculate their wills? An epoch like ours, which tries to be at once stern and merciful, heroic and human, will end by being nothing at all. The wider the channel, the weaker and slower the current!"

"You should read the *Protagoras*," replied Rosetti. "You have read it? Do you remember, then, the

passage in which Socrates proves to Protagoras that virtue is one and alone? Socrates shows himself a bit of a sophist in this passage, as so often in Plato's dialogues. . . . All the same, what he says seems to me true, at least in part. For it seems to me to be accurate to say that all the virtues are parts and organs of one sole virtue, which on that account can be described as the unique and infinite virtue: Justice. To put it more simply: A man, to be really just, must combine all the virtues, he must be courageous, prudent, reflective, stern, merciful, parsimonious, generous, heroic, human. In addition he ought to be temperate, wise, intelligent, loyal, faithful, truthful, hard-working, honest, and erudite . . . I would go so far as to say that progress does its best to mix up and, as it were, to obliterate all these scattered virtues in the one virtue of Justice, treating them as means to an end; for the more extended the sway of Justice in the world, the less need is there of each separate virtue by itself. The doctrine of 'Might is Right' is going out of fashion; consequently there is less need of courage to combat Might; there are fewer wrongs to punish or to pardon, and so there is less demand for sternness, less for mercy. . . . And so on . . . Is it not a fact, for instance, that that ancient Rome you are so fond of succeeded in compiling the first great code of law, after a long peace had commingled many and diverse moral principles, developing the sentiment of Justice at the expense of the more partial virtues? That is how I explain the fact that, while men are always lamenting the moral decadence of the world, the world goes merrily on. . . . They lament it, because they can see that this or that particular virtue, which is only a partial one, is decadent, but do not recognise that, all

the time that these partial virtues are being as it were diluted and thinned out by fusion, the composite virtue, Justice, is gaining strength. In short, Justice is the final virtue, and the other virtues are instrumental virtues. Accordingly, the epochs and the civilisations which can sacrifice the instrumental virtues to the final virtue, are at once the most perfect and the most fortunate . . . Those which can, I say . . . for the world in which we live is a turbulent planet, full of wars, revolutions, catastrophes, turbid passions, and distracting interests. Every now and then a bad fit takes it; then Justice goes to the wall, and nations, states, classes, parties, and individuals must look out for themselves. In times like those, one must do the best one can; one must have recourse to some partial virtue which provides a useful offensive and defensive weapon; one must narrow the channel and increase the violence of the current."

He paused. We took two turns in silence up and down the deserted deck, with the splash of the sea in our ears, looking through the windows as we passed at the passengers sitting in the brightly-lighted saloon.

"*Tout cela se tient,*" said Cavalcanti at last.

"And what about intellectual progress?" I added. "That too, I suppose, has its formula and rule?"

"Certainly. This one: Man is always learning even when he is mistaken; for an error is no error when it is sincere. Every sincere error is a truth."

"What do you mean, Rosetti?" I cried with a start. "If that were so, all the opinions a generation thought to be true, would be true. That would be the last straw. Just think of the consequences! There 's not a fairy-tale or a folly of whose truth man has not

succeeded in persuading and convincing himself . . . for a time."

"And they were all true," answered Rosetti with a smile. But, without leaving me time to protest, he seized my arm, and added: "Partially and in a limited sense true, however."

This remark struck us as most obscure, and we told him so. But Rosetti said:

"I will just try to make myself clear, and will then stop. I cannot remember what day of the week it is. I ask you, Ferrero, and you reply: Tuesday. But by strict logic I should have the right to doubt your answer, because you might be making a mistake; indeed, I should have the right to verify your answer, by consulting, for instance, the calendar which is in the dining-room. But the calendar also might mislead me, supposing the chief steward had forgotten to tear off the leaf this morning. I should have the right, then, to assure myself on this point by interrogating the steward. He, however, might mislead me, or himself be misled; and so on. . . . I 'll take it for granted, however, that I succeed in establishing the fact that to-day is Tuesday. I should then have the right to ask: What is a Tuesday? A division of time. But can we divide time? And what is time? . . . You see that the single question: 'What day of the week is it?' might carry me on to the end of the world, or into the most impenetrable and obscure depths of metaphysics if I wanted to pursue the doubt that flies at my approach so long as I have breath to follow it. But, as a matter of fact, I do not pursue it. . . . When you replied, 'To-day is Tuesday,' I gave the go-by to my doubts. It 's Tuesday, I said to myself. Persuasion, then, is born in me of a limitation, because I have

limited my doubt; a limitation which is unnecessary and provisional because at any moment something might happen—another remark, or another calendar—to oblige me to retract my opinion, that is to say, to remove the limit of my doubt to a farther distance. For what reason did I interrupt my doubt directly you answered, 'It is Tuesday'? Even if I wished, I could not solve this problem; and that is a pretty good reason for not trying to.

"But out of all this mystery one point, I think, emerges clearly enough: that a sort of public opinion—or 'great will'—at a certain point brings pressure to bear upon me from outside, to have done with my doubts, or be considered a lunatic if I don't. If I started on an endless enquiry in connection with my doubt as to 'What day of the week is it?' and embarked on a speculation on time, every one would advise me to consult a mental specialist. Only those afflicted with a regular disease of incredulity and children enjoy losing themselves in the infinite, and leaping from 'if' to 'if' and from 'why' to 'why.' That sentiment of the truth, then, which we call persuasion, is born in me of a limitation which is arbitrary, provisional, and imposed on me, in part at any rate, by an extrinsic will. It is, then, a provisional and limited truth. Likewise all the truths, even the most generally accepted doctrines of the sciences which seem to be most firmly based on evidence, are limited and provisional. No, science is not false, it is true; but it can only reveal provisional truths. For, whether we want to know what day of the week it is, or what matter is made of, or how the planets move, or how the stomach digests, or what happened in Rome twenty centuries ago, it is impossible for persuasion to be born in us if our minds at a certain stage do not

cease to doubt. This stage is never necessarily definite or invariable, because in part at any rate it is decided by extrinsic forces; sometimes by the will of an epoch or of a civilisation, sometimes by the very limitation of human powers. Why do we see every savant, and every generation of savants, halt at a certain stage in their journey in search of the True? Why, when they reach that stage, do they no longer doubt, do they no longer see the facts which contradict them, are they deaf to the doubts which some sceptic is indelicate enough to suggest to them? Why is it only when a new generation arises that doubt is reawakened in men's minds and the extreme limit of knowledge can be removed still farther off? Because the intelligence of men and of generations is limited. And there you have the reason why truths are born one of another, and why each one at birth kills the mother that bore her, to die in her turn when she gives birth to another. There you have the reason why we can assert that every opinion which has been securely held for some time by the human race to be true, and has given it food for thought, and has given birth to fresh truths, was provisionally and partially true. There you have the reason why we can assert that the ideas of which we make use, are useful and of service to us because they are true, at least partially and in so far as they are useful, not that they are true because they are useful and of service to us."

He paused. I had one further objection to urge.

"It may be so. But in that case how can one say that the Ptolemaic system is partially true? I could understand that being said of the Copernican system, but not of the Ptolemaic, which is entirely false."

"I agree, if you compare it with the Copernican

system, but not if you compare it with the cosmic myths of the ancient polytheism which it banished to the realms of fable; with the myth of Atlas, for instance, who bears the world on his shoulders. Compared with that myth, the Ptolemaic system contained a partial and provisional truth, which was, that this great star-flecked night, which is spread over our heads, is a connected whole, and that in this whole there are bodies which move in obedience to a certain law. It matters little that the Greeks made the universe too small, and made gross mistakes in describing the positions and movements of these celestial bodies. Think of the fables with which man had invested the firmament for thousands of years, and you will see what an immeasurable step in the infinite towards the truth the mind of man made when it evolved that theory. Contrast an idea which is proved to be false with the ideas which preceded it and which it disproved, not with the idea which followed it, and corrected it, if you want to persuade yourselves that men with time and study do really and do always learn, even when they are mistaken. For they would learn nothing, if truths did not superimpose themselves one on the other; if each generation did not take one step forward in the reality which surrounds it; if the sun could revolve round the earth and the earth round the sun, at our caprice and to suit our convenience. But if, on the contrary, with Copernicus the human mind has made a second step on the road of the infinite towards truth, the firmament"—he walked to the side, stopped, and looked up at the sky—"will again become the first sublime syllabary in which our eyes have learned to decipher the obscure alphabet of nature; the first arena in which human thought was trained for the conquest of the

earth; the first 'Why?' written by nature in characters of fire on the vault of the universe, that all may read and strive to answer it; the first of the enigmas with which nature attracts us along the roads of infinity towards that goal which every night we think we have reached as we lay our tired heads on the pillow, rejoicing that our journey is over,—only to wake next morning, fresh from our rest, to see that the goal has once more drawn away from us, and to gird ourselves again to our unending journey. . . . Truth!"

Clear as the stars to which Rosetti pointed was the light shed by his answer on the dark night which enveloped our thoughts. Convinced, both Cavalcanti and I kept silence as we paced the deck with Rosetti between us. After some minutes spent in silence, Cavalcanti, suddenly stopping amidships, said with animation:

"Rosetti, your words seem to me to revive and reanimate, here on the threshold of the Mediterranean, that ancient world, which even I, as Ferrero well knows, have sometimes thought to be spent and buried. But that austere discipline of thought, which is willing to limit itself for the purpose of producing in the finite, with sure and precise force, and in the likeness of clear and definite models, a succession of arts, laws, and customs; and which does not presume to ascend to the original source of all things, to launch itself out into the infinite, to reach the summit of the absolute, and to sound the depths of the universe—is it not the intellectual discipline which has produced the ancient civilisations of Greece and of Rome, of Italy and of the Latin countries up to the French Revolution? Is it not the seed which has given birth to the epopee, to Greek tragedy and sculpture, to

the æsthetics and the morality of Aristotle, to the politics and the laws of Rome, to the Italian art of the Middle Ages, to the philosophy of the Catholic Church, to the science of Galileo, the religion of Pascal, and the drama of Racine and Molière? Limitation, concentration, and discipline;—were not these the mainspring of those prodigious ancient civilisations whose venerable remains fill even us their distant descendants, proud though we are of our riches, with amazement? And now, I understand! I understand what an immense convulsion was wrought in the world by the discovery of America, by the French Revolution, by machinery, and by the invasion of barbarians into the domains of ancient Culture!"

At this point Rosetti said that he had walked enough, and asked us to sit down. So we sat down amidships, with our chairs facing outboard. After a moment's silence Rosetti suddenly said:

"What about the Prometheus and Vulcan myth? We must not forget that. Consider this sea which we are now entering, the sea on whose shores Homer sang, Phidias sculped, and Aristotle meditated; the sea which Rome incorporated in her greatness; the sea the Apostles sailed to spread the word of Christ; the sea in which distant Venice mirrored her marbles; the sea which the wars of the Cross and Crescent dyed with blood; the Mediterranean of the ancients and of the poets. Alas! I fear that this sea is now but a museum pillaged by the barbarians. . . . The gods have not listened to Apollo. His prophecy is coming true. Even on the shores of the ancient sea whose foam gave birth to Aphrodite, now reigns one god alone, Fire. Yes, certainly. To get rich for the sake of getting rich is mere folly, *roba da pazzi*, as our worthy doc-

tor would say. One need not be a Solomon to be able to confute Alverighi's brilliant sophisms on that point. All the same, our epoch wants to get rich for the sake of getting rich. It wants to, and that 's enough, as Alverighi said. 'Grain, iron, wool, cotton, gold, silver, those are what are wanted nowadays to satisfy the people, not sonnets and pictures!' That was the statement with which Alverighi startled us all one day. It seemed to us a blasphemy. And a blasphemy it is and always will be, to one who carries his mind back to the glories of times past. But suppose that, instead of doing that, we fix our minds on the famished multitudes which throng the streets and gates of the cities, and struggle for admission at the doors of the factories, dockyards, banks, and offices, and swarm in the ports of departure for America. . . . Is there to-day a single genius, philosophy, religion, party, state, or authority human or divine which feels itself competent to make a stand against this torrent of lusts and to drive it back? Which would not be certain, if it tried to do so, to be carried away like a piece of ice by the rapids of Niagara in winter? The world wants this useless abundance. It wants progress to be the increase of riches, and of the power and speed of every machine, beginning with liners, as Vazquez says. It wants it, and that 's enough. To prove that this definition of progress is as arbitrary, contradictory, and reversible as definitions always are, would be no difficult task. But would it be of any use? It is as firmly fixed in the minds of moderns as the column is in the Place Vendôme. Just try to persuade Vazquez that he is wrong."

"It 's only too true," sighed Cavalcanti. "America,

the French Revolution, and machinery have reduced the world to barbarism."

"They have produced a century which is without limits, and therefore without supports, through which man makes his way like a giant who totters at every step," answered Rosetti. He paused for a moment, rapt in thought, gazing on the night, while the splash of the sea echoed in our ears. Then he went on slowly: "America, the French Revolution, machinery. . . . It 's just as Signora Ferrero said. . . . But do you remember Alverighi's strange remark, that night he told the story of his life? 'History was off the track, right up to the time of the discovery of America.' What has happened to the world, then, since the discovery of America, if intelligent and educated men can assert, as some do, that we have at last found our way, while others assert just as emphatically that we have lost it? What has Christopher Columbus done for us, and ought we to canonise him or ought we not? Yes, Christopher Columbus took a great plunge. He overstepped a limit! It 's true that it was only a very tiny limit. But it was one which our civilisation had always respected. For centuries and centuries, as Alverighi said, that civilisation had lain low in the hollow of the Mediterranean, holding these Pillars of Hercules which we have just passed to be the impassable boundary of the world. And behold, one day, the 'superdivine' man passed the boundary, and with a few ships burst out upon the Atlantic. Chance, or Providence, or the Reason of history, willed it that, in the year in which Columbus discovered America, Copernicus should reach the age of nineteen,—Copernicus who, a short time afterwards, was destined from a little town in Poland to step over the bounds which

Aristotle and Ptolemy had traced round the universe, and in mind to burst out upon the infinite. . . .

"Thus in the course of a few generations Europe, with mixed feelings of stupefaction, fear, and exultation, saw a few bold spirits step over the two boundaries which the ancients had considered inviolable, and not only do so with impunity, but return with a rich booty of land and stars. . . . And then, as was to be expected, numbers rushed in the track of the first adventurers. New lands emerged on all sides from the ocean. New stars appeared on all sides in the infinite. New ideas, new ambitions, new lusts were engendered in men's minds by the first adventures and conquests. Had not then the earth become vaster and richer, the mind of man more powerful, than the ancients had thought possible? Besides, however, those limits on earth or in the universe, many others arose between man and man and in each man's mind, to mark the bounds of the True and the False, of Good and Evil, of the Beautiful and the Ugly. What numbers there were, and how inviolable they all were! The family, the school, the state, the academy, the ancients, tradition, custom, poverty, the law, the gallows, the king, Aristotle, and God; above all, God, the most ancient, august, and universal of Limits! You are right, Cavalcanti, limitation, concentration, and discipline;—these are the triangle within which the world lived, up to the discovery of America. And the ancient world, the object of your studies, Ferrero, was, compared with the modern world, above all an enclosed world, that is, a world that was limited on all sides. Perhaps this will explain to Alverighi satisfactorily why history was off the track up to the discovery of America, and why the ancients made Antæus, the old world, to die

on the shores of the Atlantic. But how could the ancients, shut in as they were on all sides by those limits, be expected to spread over the whole expanse of the world? Dig down, was what they were bound to do, as they could not spread; create arts, philosophies, and religions, as they could not conquer the earth. But, while the ships put out to discover and populate new countries, while telescopes ransacked the starry spaces, while the first riches of America poured into Europe and new ambitions and lusts were kindled in the hearts of men, their minds gradually mustered courage enough to scrutinise, one by one, the limits placed to mark the confines of Good and Evil, the True and the False, the Beautiful and the Ugly, to see whether they were firmly planted, whether they could not all be moved and placed in some better position; yes, all, even—or rather, especially—that most universal, most ancient, and most august of limits, God! Man began to long, not only for riches, but also for liberty. He invented machines, he perfected sciences. He dared to ask himself whether the new, simply because it was new, was not better than the old. He dreamed of beauties never yet seen, which should resemble no known model, of social orders which should establish themselves outside of every conventional limitation, and in which duty should become a right. He aspired to render account to himself of everything, even of himself and his own thoughts. He devised various subtle philosophies, which, under pretext of planting It in the post of honour, might transport to the bounds of that infinite which Copernicus had revealed, to where It could disturb no one, the most universal, ancient, and august, but at the same time the most inconvenient of Limits. . . . The ancients

were not mistaken, and the Church knew what she was doing when she condemned Giordano Bruno and Galileo. God was bound to pass a *mauvais quart d'heure*, the day on which the vortex of the infinite was fated to sweep away the earth like a grain of dust. In short, man began to become rich and wise, and therefore proud, ambitious, unmanageable, and insatiable, as your wife said. . . . Until one day there came an earthquake!

"At the sound of the *Marseillaise* on the ruins of the Bastille, on the fields of Marengo and Austerlitz, the work begun by Columbus and by Copernicus, continued by Galileo, Descartes, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant, was completed. Man arose, tore up and overturned all the ancient limits, and himself planted new ones as he pleased, limiting authority in every possible way, and giving himself all the liberty he could. As to God, he followed the advice of his great philosophers. He banished Him to the confines of the infinite. And then began the extraordinary happenings of which we are the witnesses. Our civilisation, rich, wise, and free, armed with fire and science; mistress of so large a part of the earth, including a continent so vast and rich as America; no longer embarrassed by any limit, either by space, or by weight, or by matter and its laws, which she has conquered with her machines and with her discoveries; no longer embarrassed by God, whom she has banished to the infinite—our civilisation, rapt as it were by the intoxication of the unlimited, bursts out on every side. . . .

"Yes, Alverighi is right. Each one of us is a demigod compared to the men who lived in the time of Dante and of Cæsar. The histories of Underhill and Feldmann surprised us. . . . Let Underhill pass, for he

had real stuff in him; he was a regular d'Artagnan of business. But the other! That a timid, irresolute, sophistical man—offspring of an ancient race of Eastern nomads—closeted in his New York study, dreaming, scribbling, telephoning, and telegraphing, should have succeeded in amassing in a few years such enormous wealth! Why, it seems almost incredible. Even his wife cannot understand it, and is half inclined to resent it. But we are all living in a world of fables and myths. I drop a letter into the slit of a box, and off it flies to the ends of the world. A train of enormous weight stands waiting in the station, and one man by himself, by moving a lever, draws it docilely after him. A man who, if he shouted till he burst his lungs, could not make himself heard a hundred yards off, takes up a little instrument, and can hear and be heard a thousand miles away. Every one of us nowadays performs a hundred miracles every day. How and why do we perform them? Because we have dared to step over all the limits before which our fathers recoiled. The dark and cold earth, on which our fathers, for all their toil, only succeeded in lighting a few fires here and there, is now all ablaze like a volcano with a thousand craters. On all sides burns the fire, exuberantly, almost without limit, ready to respond to all our needs and caprices; every one of us is becoming a demigod, as Alverighi says. Who would dare tell man, intoxicated as he is with his power, that to increase that power still further, and, with it, his riches, is not a good thing, and is not progress? Or that it is not a good thing that bread should be plentiful, fire should be plentiful, gold and iron plentiful, or that we should be able to traverse space more quickly in mind and body?

"Only . . . a danger arises, a contradiction comes to light, a trouble begins. Is there not a risk that man, having stepped over all the limits, may lose himself in the unlimited? If all these things are blessings, and go to make up progress, and if we want them, we must be prepared to pay for them, to pay for the rapid fortunes which some of us—Feldmann and Alverighi for instance—are making, to pay for the speed of the railway train, the automobile, the aeroplane, and the telegraph; to pay for all the profusion and all the comforts of the modern world—light, heat, fresh air, news to hand. And the price we must pay is the mediocrity which now infects everything. . . . If men still required in their houses, their furniture, and their clothes that studied beauty which the long discipline of handicraft succeeded in imparting to them up to the time of the French Revolution, would machinery be able to pour out over the world its vulgar and slipshod abundance? Would the hordes which landed from every part of Europe, impatient to win the fleece of gold, have been able to build at the mouth of the Hudson in only fifty years that city whose claims to beauty we have debated, if they had wished to observe scrupulously the rules of architecture formulated by Leon Battista Alberti? For in this epoch of progress every one complains that everything is decadent: workmen, teachers, soldiers, and public functionaries; and why? Because the quantity of each increases.

"To satisfy this insatiable epoch, and to keep pace with progress, such numbers of workmen, teachers, soldiers, and functionaries are required that private employers and states as well can no longer be strict in the choice of their men. They have to take good, bad, and indifferent alike, and then the good ones, who are always in

the minority, are lost in the crowd of the indifferent. Quantity conquers quality. You may say: Let the world deteriorate so long as it progresses. But where are you going to stop? How far ought we to sacrifice quality to pay for quantity? Until the differences of quality between things are reduced to the smallest conceivable? In other words, ought there to be a qualitative criterion which should be the measure of quantity, or to put it more clearly, ought there to be a limit to men's desires and to the quantity of riches, and if so what limit? An æsthetic limit? A moral limit? Where are we to draw the line between legitimate needs and extravagance? We ought to want a criterion to distinguish legitimate consumption from extravagance and dissipation, to want a limit of quantity; to want it, and that 's enough! But alas! we have passed beyond all the bounds. The 'great will' of our epoch wavers in the unlimited and is irresolute. It wants, and then does not want. At one time it deplores the slimy abundance which is covering the world and ruining the arts, the beliefs, and the virtues of the past, and curses the very name of progress. At another it gives rein to its desires, and plunges again into its wild orgies. Hence comes it that we cannot enjoy the immense riches we have accumulated, but see them rapidly become our cross. Herein lies the secret and pitiless canker of the two worlds between which we are steaming, and of all this machine-fed civilisation of ours. It is this uncertainty, this inability to distinguish between extravagance and legitimate consumption, the continual and indecisive struggle between quantity and quality."

He paused an instant in thought; then went on: "Do you remember how, in the course of our dis-

cussion on progress, I compared the United States and France? I want now to compare them again, but this time seriously, using the contrast between the two worlds to illustrate that conflict between quantity and quality which is the scourge of modern life. Cast your eye over the statistics of the last fifty years. Compare the total number of Americans and the mileage of their railways fifty years ago with what they are now. Notice how much gold, copper, iron, silver, cotton, grain, petroleum, and manufactured goods the country has produced. Would you not think that you were reading, not about contemporary history, but about the very Saturnalia of quantity? Has the world ever seen a nation clamber at such a pace, four rungs at a time, up the ladder of fortune? And yet America is not satisfied. Why is it always said in Europe that all the Americans think about is making money? There 's not a day passes without their trying to create some new religion. There 's not a model of art or of elegance, but they try their best to appropriate, understand, and imitate it, whether it be Italian pictures or Japanese ceramics, English stables or Paris fashions, your Roman history, Ferrero, or the universities of Europe, the Vedantism of India or the socialism and the imperialism of Europe, spiritualism or Sionism, intellectuality or snobbery. There 's not a nation in the world which bows the knee with more mystic fervour before the divinities of Art and of Science. There 's not a nation which is tormented by a more insistent call to improve things in general, and which, in responding to that call, is more indefatigable in ransacking the resources of earth and sky. In what other country do the middle classes spend so much, run so deeply into debt, and pinch

themselves so much in the effort to imitate the fashions and the luxuries of the rich, to get just one peep through a narrow chink into the Olympus of the wealthy?

"Granted that the United States are the classic ground of snobbery: Why are they? Why did the Americans one fine day interrupt their business to declare war against Spain? What is it that America hopes to find in mystic ideas, philosophical doctrines, institutions, customs, the elegancies of the whole universe, even in 'Christian Science,' on which Heaven have mercy? What treasures do the Americans hope to find in the shops of European antique-dealers—Americans like Mr. Feldmann for instance and all those other rich Americans who spoil the antiquities-market of the old world? A criterion of quality! For quantity alone does not satisfy, though it satiates, not Mrs. Feldmann only but every one else including the Americans. A civilisation is only a system of criteria of quality, of *étalons de mesure*, as they say in France. The Americans, having in hot haste extracted from the bowels of the earth wealth in such quantity, feel bound to translate it into quality: into Beauty, Virtue, Elegance, Wisdom, Glory, and Greatness. If they did not, there would be no use in producing it. But America lacks the *point d'appui;* she lacks time and patience. There are too many models, and a lack of the discretion and discernment which we have seen to be the rule of artistic progress. In short, America lacks the limits and consequently the criteria of choice, and the act of will and the sovereign force necessary to impose them. She has not yet got, and I do not think that, so long as Fire is her only God, she ever can have, tradition, discipline, or continuity in action as well as in enjoyment. In everything, in

art as in politics, in science as in religion, tradition and discipline are replaced by violent but fleeting gusts of passion, raging but ephemeral fevers, like those of Mr. Feldmann which irritate his wife so much. In vain will quantity struggle to translate itself into quality, so long as no limits are put to it. Cast your eyes on the other side of the Atlantic, and you will see quality struggling to resist being resolved into quantity. France, by her Revolution, gave the death-blow to that ancient limited civilisation whose efforts were directed rather to perfecting the quality than to increasing the quantity of things. She gave it its death-blow, it is true,—not intentionally,—with quite another object in view; for it is only fair to say that she perhaps alone among nations has always aspired, and still aspires, to value and to be valued more for quality than for quantity.

"But the excellent cannot be multiplied so quickly and easily or in so large a measure as the mediocre. . . . And so we see the nation which did not tremble before Europe in arms, which dared to defy God and to plant Reason on His throne,—we see her hesitate and grow restless because the statistics of her neighbours are swelling faster than her own. She cannot make sure whether she is decadent, or still in the van of nations. At one moment she is full of pride, at the next, of discouragement. At times she feels herself deserted and wonders whether she should fight to the last gasp against the universal triumph of quantity; whether, like other nations, she should let herself be Americanised. When, in the course of my solitary wanderings over the world, I come to Paris, I often walk at sundown from the Louvre along the Champs Élysées towards the Arc de Triomphe. . . . You too, I think,

must retain an indelible impression of that twilight hour. . . . I feel myself then like a tiny, tiny atom on an immense highroad of history and of the world. But for some time past in the Champs Élysées, in the midst of the rapid and constant stream of smart equipages, a thought has occurred to disquiet me. It is the thought of the iron which Vulcan is forging in Germany! One and a half million tons in 1870, two in '75, three in '80, nearly five in '90, eight and a half in 1900, eleven in 1905, nearly fifteen in 1910. My friends, the day that Apollo made his speech in Olympus saw the beginning of the war between him and Vulcan which is now raging over all the world. Which will win? Iron is undoubtedly a precious metal. Railways and machines are made of it; so are guns, ships, and cannon. But so to encumber the world with iron as to banish from it all beauty and all the proofs of its own excellence that the human mind can contrive, is not equivalent to reducing it to barbarism. Which will win, Vulcan or Apollo, quantity or quality?"

He again paused. Profoundly impressed, we too kept silence, unwilling to disturb his meditations. A barefooted sailor slipped noiselessly by on the deserted deck under the wan rays of the lamps. The splash of the sea, as of a waterfall, continued to echo through the night. A few minutes passed in silence. Then Cavalcanti, hoping perhaps to tempt Rosetti to continue, said in a low voice:

"Vulcan, I 'm afraid."

"Who knows?" answered Rosetti slowly. "The future is even darker than the night through which we are steaming. Certainly, if what our eyes tell us is true, Vulcan is in a fair way to become the master of the world. And yet. . . . Can it be that once more,

as at the earliest dawn of history, men will worship Fire, and Fire alone? No, I can't think it possible. Only, Apollo will need the help of an immense act of will on the part of those multitudes whom nowadays the impulse of progress forces to confuse the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false, good and evil, all over the face of the globe, in their struggle to plunder the earth of its treasures." He paused, as if in hesitation, then went on: "Need I say it? This act of will must place limits. . . . Limits. . . . On what? I 'll take my courage in both my hands. Hitherto I have only hinted at the answer. Don't throw stones at me. . . . What is that lack of conventions, models, rules, principles, traditions, intrinsic and extrinsic limits, to which I have so often alluded,—in art, philosophy, action, expenditure, and desires,—but that liberty which for a century past has triumphed in Europe and America? The liberty promised by the Reform, by the philosophy of the eighteenth century, and by the Revolution? Let me make my meaning clear. Apollo veiled his godlike face for shame and grief at the sight of Liberty governing the two worlds in the guise of sceptical dynasties, enfeebled aristocracies, double-faced democracies, and ignorant parliaments; when he saw Europe and America swayed by states which fear, where they should be feared; which dare not spend a thousand francs if they think the shopkeeper round the corner would disapprove; and let every rich draper tell them that he can run his warehouse better than they can run public affairs; which, stripped as bare of pomps and ceremonies as of respect and prestige, and embroiled in a thousand ridiculous little schemes and interests, pay salaries to the barbarians who would destroy the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and which are not

ashamed to own themselves incompetent in matters of art, philosophy, and religion, that is to say, ignorant and useless! But it is now a long time, Signor Cavalcanti, since Fire and Liberty contracted a secret alliance. All the philosophies, all the schools, all the political, religious, and social movements which in recent centuries have either abolished the old limits altogether or removed them to a safe distance . . . ye gods, what a lot there have been! It makes one giddy to think of them: Protestantism, the French Revolution, the critical philosophies, romanticism, all the wars and minor revolutions of the nineteenth century, democratic theories, parliamentary institutions, political liberties, railways, steamboats, Rousseau's writings, emigration, America, the discoveries of science, the spread of elementary education. . . .

"All these inventions of the devil have gradually instilled into the minds of men that restlessness, that pride, that longing for novelty, those lusts and ambitions amongst which and owing to which Fire has succeeded in producing in the world that uproar which Signora Ferrero finds so appalling. But Fire triumphant has rewarded Liberty for her help, and has published its alliance with her. . . . For not a day passes but Fire increases man's restlessness, pride, desire for novelty, lust, ambition, and hurry; and with them the mania for liberty, the need to abolish limits right and left. . . . August Comte is to-day as good as forgotten, so much so that we all felt inclined to laugh when we met one of his few surviving followers here on board; and why did we? Because he tried to create a limited philosophy which should accept at least the truth of science and the reality of the world; a philosophy which, like the philosophies of Aristotle and

St. Thomas, might be an instrument of discipline. It 's the unlimited philosophies which hold the field to-day, those which do not shrink from discussing whether science is true and whether the world exists. The same machines which served the unbelievers in their assault upon God, now serve the believers to demolish science. Restless and subtle minds crop up on every side, teaching men to recognise no limits in the field of thought, even at the risk of being left stranded in the world without religion, science, or other guide."

At this point I could not resist interrupting.

"But may it not be," I said, "that the philosophy of to-day, in her researches into the value of science, is doing her best to protect us against a new imposture which threatens us? Everything nowadays pretends to be, and asks to be called, science; even the concoctions of Mrs. Eddy. Christian 'science,' forsooth! And in the name of science the barbarians have tried to destroy the *Iliad* and *Odyssey!* You yourself put the whole thing in a nutshell the other evening, when you said that science had become the factotum of the modern world. We must, then, limit it, or, if you prefer it, delimit it somewhat. . . . Oblige it, as Bergson tries to do, to recognise that it is only inanimate matter whose depths it can sound. . . . It must not try, as it does, to monopolise life and living beings."

"True," replied Rosetti. "It is also true, in a certain measure at least, as Alverighi has so often repeated to us in justification of his flight to America, that the intellectual oligarchy of Europe is not free from arrogance, corruption, and fraud. Anything but! But do you believe that the philosophy of Bergson is a potent enough antidote? Or would it be more effectual to

adopt Alverighi's suggestion and Americanise the world? The seat of evil, alas! lies deeper than the intellect, and to cure it we need, not philosophy, but a virtue."

He paused an instant, either searching for some way in which to expand this last thought, or disturbed by the two wine-merchants, who passed quickly by, chattering in their usual rasping dialect. The splash of the ocean still resounded in our ears.

"A virtue! What virtue?" asked Cavalcanti, after a few moments' silence.

Rosetti continued:

"Notwithstanding the immoderate lusts which obsess our souls, we are better than our predecessors. It would be unjust to deny it. As I said a short time back, we have mixed no few pagan virtues with several Christian virtues, and added one or two new ones; consequently the world is more just, that is, more perfect than it was. The powerful abuse their power less, not simply because they cannot, but because they do not want to abuse it. We are perhaps a little more intemperate, but we are also much more hard-working. In short, if we balance the sums of both sides we shall have no cause to complain about the net result. But . . . There is a 'but' . . . Loyalty. No civilisation ever had more need to put a precise limit on the liberty to lie. We are always coming back to the necessity of a limit. It 's little use for me to preach that man must journey on to meet the future without turning his head. I am under no delusion, I can assure you. It is just because they are limits and, what is more, conventional, provisional limits, that man is continually at war with the principles on which social and moral order is based. Sometimes he is openly at war; then his interests and passions seek

to upset and force a way past the limits—with wars, revolutions, martial laws, bombs, outrages, and crimes. More often, because it is less dangerous, his weapon is the secret one of sophistry. Why has sophistry never died of the mortal wounds which logic has given it in so many memorable duels? Why has every epoch granted privileges to, and heaped gold on, a public and official corps of sophists, the barristers? How could Socrates imagine that he was carrying out a great moral reform in teaching men to reason rightly? Because sophistry is the armory whose weapons enable man to observe the conventional principles when they attribute a right to him, to elude them, while pretending to respect them, when they impose on him a duty.

"And if man made large drafts on this armory when the principles were sanctified by the religions, imagine what will happen, now that the world is no longer in its infancy, and has discovered the secret of the game. You are right, Cavalcanti. We are too old, and we know too many arts, too many moral codes, too many different theories. The critical spirit is too much alive. Above all, we have grown too much accustomed to enjoying the unbridled liberty in which we live. You were right, Cavalcanti, when you said that for this reason our civilisation is so plastic and progressive. Consequently the older, the richer, the wiser, the more powerful a man becomes, the more he ought to ponder, to repeat to himself, and to stamp upon his memory this supreme rule of wisdom: 'Forward, and turn not to see the arm which urges you on! Put your faith in the principle which you profess, and observe it, as if it were imposed on you by God, and were the only true, the only fair, the only good principle, the health and the safety of the world. Discuss not, sophisticate not,

exact not. Be faithful unto the end, though it be at risk to fortune and to life. But, if the principle falls to the ground, resign yourself as if it had been but a human, conventional, arbitrary limitation of the infinite Truth, of the infinite Beauty, of the infinite Good, which continue to pour into life through the channel of the principle which has conquered your own. Bind yourself firmly by a resolve not to lie and not to betray, even when truth and loyalty cannot be required of you.' Instead of that, from our cradles we are taught by triumphant quantity to lie.

"Yes, quantity is in the ascendant to-day, thanks to machines, to fire, to America; but it cannot assume openly, in its own name, the government of the world. The 'most expensive shoemaker in the world' has had to take his advertisement down, because not even an epoch which is so ready as ours is to merge all the *étalons de mesure* in mediocrity, can reconcile itself to recognising a thing to be superior because it costs more, or to making of quantity the criterion of quality. 'I pay more for it, because it is superior' is what every one would like to persuade himself; if he could not, he would have to confess himself a fool. Man has need at every time and in every place to translate quantity into quality, even when he does not possess any sure qualitative criterion. In that case quantity is forced to assume the mask of quality, and to counterfeit it so far as to deceive men into thinking that, when they are procuring abundance only, they are also getting beauty and goodness. But please tell me, what are all these Smyrna carpets, made at Monza; these pieces of Indian furniture made in Bavaria; these imitation American, German, and Italian champagnes, these *nouveautés de Paris* made all over the place; these rabbits which,

pace Darwin, turn into otters in a couple of weeks—what are all these but the lies of quantity robbing ruined and banished quality of her last rags? Who does not know the deceits which science has lent to industry? Quantity triumphant has made of modern civilisation an immense school of lying. Therefore we no longer possess any of those delicate instruments of truth and of faith—like a man's oath and his honour—with which religions and aristocracies used to restrain man in secret, and to force him to be sincere when he could lie with impunity, faithful when he could be a traitor. . . .

"And so we see difficulties arise and become acute in modern society, to solve which doctrines are evolved, institutions founded, precautions taken; but all to no purpose, because they are questions of loyalty; and the sentiment of loyalty, if it existed, would solve them in a second. The intellectual oligarchy of Europe, for instance, which Alverighi, with a substratum of truth though he put it rather too strongly, has accused of deceiving the world. But is not the cause of this evil a moral one? Every profession is regulated by a morality of its own. An officer may be dissolute or run into debt, but he must not be cowardly or afraid of death, under pain of being cashiered. The merchant may be a coward, but he must pay his debts. The priest must be decently behaved, at least in outward seeming. . . . And so on. Only the writer and thinker has no professional morality. He may be a coward, a liar, a rake, or a spendthrift. He may have all the vices. Any one who knows human nature will not be surprised at the numbers who take pretty free advantage of this concession. What ought to be the professional virtue of the writer and thinker? Loyalty. The critic, the

scientist, or the philosopher of whom it could be proved that, for some interest or other, he has asserted what he judged beautiful to be ugly, true what he believed to be false, or *vice versa*, ought to be disgraced like the officer who runs away. Suppose our civilisation succeeded in inculcating into men in general the belief that loyalty is for every one the elementary virtue, and into the intellectuals the belief that it is their professional virtue—then science would give up pretending to an empire over life which she does not possess. She would spontaneously assert herself to be a sure, but limited, principle of truth. She would scruple to delude men into thinking that she can be their factotum, and can give them health, youth, goodness, victory, and riches; or can prove that Romulus and Homer never existed! Nor would men feel constrained in protest to attach themselves, like Señora Yriondo, to 'Christian Science'!"

He paused, drew out his watch and said:

"Gracious goodness! It 's midnight. To bed, to bed!"

And off he went. Cavalcanti and I paced up and down the deck for a while, both of us deep in thought. Then Cavalcanti said to me:

"He 's a real genius. And what a profound thinker!"

"True," I answered. "But, if he is right, we must be wrong. When I say 'we,' I mean 'our times.' He has kept us suspended between the two worlds; but now I should like to know on which side we ought to come down. . . . On this or on that? I feel tempted to echo the doctor's favourite refrain: One cannot live astride of two worlds!"

CHAPTER VII

AT noon on Friday we reached 37° 2′ lat., 1° 37′ long., and that afternoon while we steamed along in view of the mountainous and deserted coasts of Spain, the little chance society which had been formed in the *Cordova* in mid-ocean began to dissolve. Friendships contracted in those two weeks cooled off. Cliques broke up. Every one began once more to think of luggage, land, and business; of the vast world over which we should all disperse once more in two days' time, perhaps never to meet again. The Admiral was nowhere to be seen. I met Alverighi only for a moment, hurrying to Vazquez with a bundle of papers in his hand. Rosetti stayed in his cabin, writing. Cavalcanti alone did not bother himself about land or time of arrival or luggage; his thoughts were centred on the preceding evening's discussion. The sea was a vivid blue, and rather rough, while the sky was bright, though shrouded in cold mists on the horizon. We talked at length about the discussion, and confided our impressions to each other.

"At last I understand," said Cavalcanti, "why Olympus is a hell! Because the artists, the men of letters, and the learned men of Europe are so bitter towards each other, and want each to be the only one in his own category, to be unique, in fact. Beauty and Truth are, it is true, infinite: but the number of Beauties and of Truths which succeed in convincing

a generation, or in evoking its admiration, is limited. Every Truth which succeeds in shining forth obscures a thousand others which might have come to light. Every Beauty which triumphs keeps off the scene a thousand others which otherwise might have triumphed. Consequently art, science, and philosophy cannot but be the battle-fields of a continual and fierce war, in which the life of one means the death of a thousand. Such a state of things is inconceivable in America, where man lives in the unlimited, and only aims at exploiting a land which is even vaster and richer than his desires. Alverighi is right. He who would live in peace should go and join the grain-merchants in Rosario. A nation's culture only triumphs when it is attacking, and repelling the attacks of other nations' culture."

"Tell the Romans that, when you get there. You 'll have some difficulty in making them believe you."

"Unfortunately there is no glory or grandeur which is safe from a sudden attack. Nowadays classical culture is on the down grade. Why? Because the Greek and Latin literatures are no longer the official models of taste; because the times and the states have recognised every man's right to choose for himself the model which pleases him—in ancient literature as in modern—in Europe as in America—and even in futurism. Why then ought we to study Greek or Latin literature in preference to French or English or Russian? If to-morrow the comedies of Menander or the complete tragedies of Sophocles were discovered in Egypt, should we have any authority for forbidding Alverighi to say that it would have given him greater pleasure if Gorki had written another of his hideous plays? The struggle is an unending one."

We paused, gazing at the sea. Our thoughts wandered over a still vaster sea of ideas. Cavalcanti went on after a few minutes:

"But . . . What an extraordinary, prodigious, positively unique epoch is this in which it has fallen to our lot to live! Few recognise the fact, but that 's no matter. Is not the man who tries for the first time to live outside the limits, simply trying to acclimatise himself in the infinite? Suppose he succeeded in his sublimely daring endeavour, as he has succeeded in so many others. Peace might reign on earth and also in the Olympus of Truth and Beauty. The Beauties and the Truths might boycott each other less relentlessly. Earth might become an Eden, and even Alverighi might love the whole of it as passionately as he loves his Rosario. With a God to guide without commanding, whether he be called God, Reason, or Science——"

"God is no God, unless he commands," I interrupted brusquely.

"Must we needs be engulfed in anarchy, then?"

"There 's always the State to fall back upon," I answered. "It 's little use repeating that liberal principles, subversive ideas, and the critical spirit undermine the state founded by the Revolution. Compare the European state with the great Moslem states—Turkey, for example—which base their authority on the religious idea, and then tell me which is the state that can command and make itself obeyed. . . . And this power—it struck me only this morning—is the effect of a limitation. Nowadays, in Europe and in America, the authority of the State is divided up amongst a great number of persons. Each one has his own little bit of power and his own strictly delimited

office. These limits are at once an obstacle to him in evil-doing and a support to him in resolutely performing his restricted task. Consequently the governments who avail themselves of these instruments or limits can effect stupendous results. They can marshal and deploy men and things in such masses and with such force as the world hitherto has never seen. Look at Turkey, on the other hand. In Turkey the power of a few men in the highest positions is unlimited, not only because there are no principles of public right to limit it, but also because the organs of the State are little specialised and the government can make what use it pleases of most of them. And these few persons find themselves in a void without supports, when there is any important enterprise on hand; just like us in Europe, now, when we judge works of art. Have you read the *Elements of Political Science*, by Gaetano Mosca? Read it. You will find all this explained with singular clearness and acumen."

"I agree; but whence comes the impulse which moves the modern State? From the people, from the nation. Consequently the State cannot help restoring to the nation the force which the latter gives it. And how could the State keep the people in subjection, if the latter chose to rebel? When the State was founded on tradition, it could exercise on any generation a force, whether small or great, which it had not received from it, but from preceding centuries."

The objection was a decisive one, and increased the disquiet which I had felt ever since the preceding evening. Was Cavalcanti also, then, hesitating on the margin of the two worlds? Could one live thus? Which side was right and which wrong in the circumstances? Oh! how I longed to be able to feel and to wish, to

love and to hate, blindly; to decide, and feel no doubt!

What with this conversation, and the discussion of the day before, I had almost forgotten Mrs. Feldmann. That evening, shortly before dinner, I saw her suddenly appear in the vestibule, elegantly dressed and bejewelled as usual. When I asked her, with some embarrassment, how she was, she looked at me with a tired look, smiled, and holding out her hand said in French:

"Aussi mal que possible! Mais il a bien fallu m'arracher à ma cabine et descendre; je dois moi aussi penser à mes bagages."

She then asked me when we should arrive.

"The day after to-morrow, Sunday," I answered, "before noon, provided that the Gulf of Lyons only behaves decently to us."

I did not know whether I might allude to her troubles or how I ought to begin. Fortunately the Admiral came up, and we discussed the weather and the voyage with the embarrassment usual with people who are talking of one thing and thinking about another. The bell sounded. We entered the dining-room together. Once more I saw, at every table, nudges, signs, winks, heads and eyes turned round, as on that evening on which Mrs. Feldmann's entry had shed over the *Cordova's* modest dining-room the glory of her fabulous wealth. But it seemed to me that the gestures and glances conveyed a different meaning this time. They seemed to say: "You must have been up to some fine tricks, to have got yourself into your present mess." Our table was rather cold and silent that evening, for the first time; for we were all thinking of the same thing, and none of us dared broach the

subject. When dinner was over, we came out together. When we were in the ante-room, Mrs. Feldmann put on a cloak which she had left on the sofa, and, turning to me, said:

"Will you come with me on deck? I must get a breath of air."

"I 'm in for it!" I thought, as I followed her rather unwillingly.

I had no sooner got outside, than I felt that the air was cold. I left her a moment, and went back to the vestibule to fetch my coat. There I found the fair Genoese, the São Paulo doctor and his wife, and the jeweller, engaged in a brisk conversation.

"She 's got some brass!" the Genoese was saying. "After what has happened! To come in dressed up like that, as if she were going to a ball! That by itself is quite enough for me. Her husband is quite right to get rid of her."

"And then to put on pearls, which one can see to be false a mile off," added the jeweller. "What does she take us for? Blind, or idiots?"

I went out again, and joined Mrs. Feldmann on deck. I sat down beside her, feeling considerably embarrassed, and wondering how I ought to begin the conversation. But she anticipated me.

"I see it all now," she said. "I am a fool, I know; but not quite such a fool as people think. I 've racked my scanty supply of brains for two days. You, as a man of science, judge if I 'm not right. My husband thought I suspected him!"

That was how she explained many facts which had struck her as unaccountable at the time. One day, for instance, her husband had made a tremendous scene because, having seen in his portmanteau scents,

brushes, combs, and similar articles in profusion, she had asked him laughingly if he was going off in search of adventures. Another day, when she had opened by mistake a letter addressed to him, he had been within an ace of threatening to divorce her, if such a thing happened again. Yet another time there had been a terrible squabble, because she, irritated by some trifling difference of opinion, had told him that he was not made to have a wife and family, but a mistress, whom he could change every other year.

"And to think that I never suspected anything! The wretch never understood me one bit. He was always distrustful, I always trustful, blindly trustful. I can't help it; I 'm made like that."

I listened to her long speech with an impassive, almost stern, air, and with my eyes fixed upon her. At last, remembering what the Admiral had told me, I said to her that her surmise was not an improbable one. I added by way of a feeler:

"So that was why he would n't breakfast with you every morning?"

She looked at me in surprise.

"What do you mean?"

I then told her what the Admiral had said. But before I had got half-way through, she wrung her hands, and cried:

"*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* Even that 's not too outrageous for the madman! It 's the countess who has put this into his head, I 'll be bound. Wicked old hag! I know! She must have mesmerised him."

Vexed at my own tactlessness, I tried to turn the conversation, remarking that while it was right to take things seriously, it was wrong to take them tragically. I reminded her that disasters often proved to

be blessings, and that she was still rich, young, and beautiful.

"*Vous me flattez,*" she said with modest self-satisfaction. "It 's quite true. I don't look so bad by the side of Miss Robbins. You never saw such a vulgar creature!"

I began explaining to her that liberty would not be the worst of disasters for her, and that she should be reasonable, and not complain of a misfortune which might prove to be a blessing to her. But she drew herself up, frowned, and interrupted me suddenly, saying:

"I, settle down in Paris, *en femme divorcée?* And let the whole world believe that I have betrayed my husband? Never!"

"Do not exaggerate, Mrs. Feldmann. There are such a lot of divorced women in the world nowadays. The world is not as it used to be."

"A divorced woman is always guilty in the eyes of the world. Every man thinks he is at liberty to make love to her."

"That won't kill her!"

But she did not give me time to make the rather broad joke which was on the tip of my tongue, for she went on:

"I live alone? How could I? What should I do, with no one to lean upon? Do you think that a woman of my age can at a day's notice recover what you call her liberty?"

"Marry again, then, if you don't want your liberty," I replied, going straight to the point.

I had only made matters worse.

"I marry again? Go about with another man, when my husband was still alive? Never! I should

feel I was going about with a lover. I 'm rather *vieux jeu*, as my daughter says."

My stock of advice was exhausted.

"What do you want then?" I asked her sternly, for I was losing my patience.

She raised her eyes to mine, and said with firm dignity:

"I want to remain Mrs. Feldmann, my husband's wife, as I have been for twenty-two years. Is that too much to ask?"

That was a new idea; and her answer silenced me. I paused a moment in confusion; then, adopting a less aggressive tone, I asked her what she intended to do. She answered:

"Take the express for Paris and Havre or Cherbourg directly I land, and join the first liner that leaves for New York. When my husband sees me again, I 'm sure he 'll think better of it. My husband loves me," she concluded with a confident air, accompanying the phrase with that same enigmatical smile which I had noticed once before when she made the same remark. "Do you doubt it?"

I doubted it so strongly, that she had been able to read my doubt in my eyes. But I answered her merely by asking why, then, her husband wanted to divorce her, asking myself at the same time what that smile of hers meant.

"He had to go back to New York," she replied, "on some business matter. He did n't want to leave me. Miss Robbins has got him into her toils once more in New York. Now I understand why we made that long tour in South America. The 'Grand Continental' scandal was only a pretext. He wanted to escape Miss Robbins. I 'm sure of it. Lisetta thinks so too."

I kept silence, not caring to challenge so convincing an authority, and at the same time unwilling either to destroy Mrs. Feldmann's illusions or to suggest fresh ones to her. This time too she interpreted my silence correctly, and asked me with some anxiety:

"Don't you think so? Do you think I 'm mistaken?"

But I was beginning to feel really sorry for the poor woman, so I tried to hide my doubts. I endeavoured to comfort her, but was tactless enough to try to do so by reminding her of her culture, intelligence, friendships, and money.

"You 're like all the rest," she interrupted excitedly. "Money, money! 'You 've got millions; what more can you want?' If my husband divorces me, deserts me, turns me out into the street when the whim seizes him, I 've no right to complain. I have my millions, and can always live in a fine house, buy a motor car, and wear a pearl necklace."

She paused, then went on in a tired voice: "Have n't I stuck to my side of the bargain? Have I had lovers? Have n't I been faithful, docile, and submissive? Have n't I loved him, and don't I love him now? If I said that I now liked some other man better, would n't every one call me a wretch? No; it 'll be a scandal if any court can be found to grant him a divorce. It 's impossible, I can't believe it. What should I do if he got one? Where should I go, I, a lone woman, without family and home, suspected and defamed? What will the world think of me? And then, when one has lived half one's life in America, as I have, do you think that one can start afresh living exclusively in Europe? Life in Europe is too narrow, too petty, too full of worry. No; we have made our

wealth together, part of it is mine. My husband has not got the right to rob me of it, and give it to a maid-servant. I have made myself a position in society both in Europe and America, and I don't want to give it up just because of his whims. . . . If I can only get to New York in time. *Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* . . . Why *is* America such a long way off!"

She sighed, and burst into tears, without heeding the passengers who were strolling about the deck and stopping to stare at her.

"You despised the riches of America and the splendours of modern life," I thought to myself rather sadly, "so long as you thought you had got them safe. But now that you are afraid of losing them . . . It 's true, then, that the good things of this world are insipid when one has them; but one can't do without them!"

I tried to comfort her in another way, pointing out that, if her husband died, she would be just as much left alone in the world without a home or family. She must pretend then, if the worst came to the worst, that she had been left a widow.

"But he 's not dead!" she sobbed; "if he were, I should n't be so wretched!"

At this juncture the Admiral joined us, and began to console her, with a tact and delicacy which I admired all the more for the contrast it made with my own awkwardness. When she had calmed down a little, she retired, accompanied by the Admiral. I went off, with my mind full of the previous day's discussion about loyalty. All the same, I was still bothered by the old dilemma; was she a poor victim, or was she acting a part? Her tears had moved me, but they had not yet convinced me. They had diverted my thoughts, however, from my philosophical difficulties.

Next day—it was Saturday, and the eve of our arrival—when I met the Admiral I told him what Mrs. Feldmann had told me the evening before, and I did not hide from him my own opinion that her confidence in her husband's ultimate return to his senses was over-optimistic. But the Admiral did not despair. He said that the human heart was full of mysteries, and uttered a lot of other platitudes, which once more caused me to suspect that he knew more than he said. I continued my inquiries, using every remark of his as a lever to extract something more, and I gradually wormed out of him everything he knew. Encouraged perhaps by her long friendship with him, and by the fact that he was old enough to be her father, Mrs. Feldmann had imparted some strange confidences to him the day before. She had told him that she had been educated in a rather romantic atmosphere "amongst flowers and music," in a state of ignorance which was blissful because it was free from curiosity. Her idea of love in real life was drawn from the melo-dramas she saw on the stage. Also, for some reason, her girl friends had always abstained from discussing the subject in her presence. How often had they said to her, when she met them again as married women: "None of us ever dared say anything before you!" But when she married, she had to realise that man's idea of love is quite different from that of the heroes of lyric drama. At first she had felt rather inclined to laugh at this discovery though it annoyed and distressed her at the same time. But after a while she had let herself be carried away by the torrent of passion, and had really quite enjoyed it. . . . She was bound to confess that, granted that men's idea of love was the true one, she had been simply adored, from

morning till night, and from night till morning. She remembered, however, that three or four times the volcano had seemed to be burnt out, or rather, suddenly covered with snow—the last time, during the "Great Continental" crisis. Each time her husband had been eager to excuse himself for it, alleging the pressure of work and business, although it had never occurred to her to reproach him for it. She had believed him—because she was a fool. But now she was beginning to ask herself if the reason for that sudden frost was not Miss Robbins instead of the "Great Continental," and if, on the previous occasion, there had not been some other woman in the background. But the volcano had always broken out again, even after the "Great Continental" crisis, especially at Rio; for he had never displayed greater warmth of passion towards her than in the last months before his departure from Rio for New York. On this account she was relying on her own beauty to convert him. She intended to let him see her dressed in a way which, she knew, appealed to him greatly. Both would burst into tears, and——

"I understand!" I cried laughing.

What I had understood, at that precise moment, was Mrs. Feldmann's peculiar smile every time she referred to her husband and his feelings. But suddenly, a sad thought froze the smile upon my lips. Could it really fall to the lot of a virtuous woman, forty-five years old, to have to devise meretricious wiles in order to seduce her own husband? The most tragic horrors of life are, alas! just those which inspire laughter in the more foolish and vapid, that is to say, the majority, of men. Was not the subject of my own laughter one of those horrid secrets of which the world

is full? My laughter died away; and my heart swelled with pity and remorse. Had I too, then, been guilty of the cowardice which so often hardens us against the victim of an injustice? Had I too tried to persuade myself that the victim had deserved her fate, as so many men do, to spare themselves the feeling of regret for injustice unpunished, and the trouble of helping the oppressed? So my heart made me decide in her favour, and I resolutely came to the conclusion that the husband must be either a lunatic or a villain. During luncheon we discussed various topics. The Admiral talked about guns and armour-plate, Alverighi about Paris and bankers, Rosetti about certain works which he intended to put in hand at Bellaria at once. Cavalcanti alone did not speak, being the only one of us whose thoughts dwelt less on worldly matters than on the ancient Mediterranean world, now only half-alive if not entirely dead.

At noon we reached 41° 22′ lat. and 4° 2′ E. long. Before the siesta, I drew Rosetti aside, and, impelled by my own anxiety, imparted to him in confidence the strange story the Admiral had told me. Rosetti listened, and cried:

"Man is born to trouble!" He thought for a moment, then added smiling and shaking his head: "Limits, bounds, stages. Man can upset all the other limits, even God; but there is one limit which will always stand immovable, Sex. A man cannot become a woman, nor a woman a man. Men cannot live without women nor women without men. Is n't it clear, then, that we cannot shirk the obligation to define the respective provinces of man's and woman's activities, not to mention their respective rights and duties? Ask Alverighi whether he feels inclined to

concede to individuals the same right in love as in æsthetics to make for himself his own law and his own standard of what is possible and what is not possible."

I then explained to Rosetti the doubts which had been troubling me: whether we ought or ought not to combat the principles of this unlimited civilisation? But Rosetti gave some excuse or other for not answering my question, and we separated.

I left my cabin about four, and found that we were out of sight of land in the middle of the Gulf of Lyons—tame lions they were for the nonce. Crossing the promenade deck, I found Rosetti leaning against the port bulwark, engaged in a discussion with the doctor and Alverighi, who were standing in front of him. There was nothing surprising in that. What did surprise me was that I saw at once that all three, even the usually calm Rosetti, were much excited. Not one of them took any notice of me. Rosetti was saying to the doctor:

"Yes, yes! But man nowadays works like a horse. He has at last conquered his unconquerable laziness. Surely you would not grudge him the small concessions our epoch grants him?"

Alverighi made an emphatic gesture of assent; but the doctor said:

"Oh, very well! When your wife grows old and ceases to please you, you 'd better copy Mr. Feldmann. Three cheers for America!"

And, saluting us in his stiff military way, he went off.

As soon as he had gone, I said, smiling and looking at the other two:

"What has happened? Has that blessed doctor been too much even for your patience, Rosetti?"

"He 's a good chap," said Rosetti, shrugging his shoulders and regaining his composure: "But even good chaps sometimes——"

Alverighi told me that they had discussed Mrs. Feldmann's case, and the doctor had ended by bursting into a furious invective against America, the French Revolution, democracy, emigration, and modern civilisation in all its aspects, which he had defined as nothing less than the sewer of the universe! Rosetti in the end had lost patience, and the battle, of which I had heard the last volleys, had ensued.

"But you," I said to Rosetti with a smile, "were talking ironically, I 'm sure. . . . 'Irony is a gift of God.' If not, good-bye to one of our limits! You too are championing the limitless civilisation."

At that moment Vazquez came up, and took Alverighi off for their usual business talk. I was left alone with Rosetti, who took me by the arm and began to pace the deck, slowly and in silence, leaning on me as if he were tired.

"No, no," he said after a few moments, "I was not speaking ironically. I was talking quite seriously. I exaggerated perhaps; but what can you expect? I hate hearing a man grumble like that against the vices, the corruption, and the depravity of our times."

"All the same, Rosetti," I said, "I might almost say that I understand the doctor's indignation more than your own. Think for one moment. Chance has opened for us a little aperture through which we have been able to spy upon a great family. What have we seen? Horrors——"

"If," replied Rosetti, "you could take the roofs off the houses of a town, you would probably find nothing but horrors like, or even worse than, those.

Decompose our civilisation into the individual existences which compose it, and you will find, with but few exceptions, nothing but envy, hatred, lust, vanity, egoism, brutality, coarseness, unrestrained greed for sensual enjoyments, if not downright vice and depravity. Our times are coarse, it is true. You are quite right; I don't deny it. But they have their redeeming features. The spirit which animates man to face the hardships of his daily work is a noble one. It is compounded of hatred of idleness, an ardent desire to do good and to make better, a lively sentiment of solidarity and of justice, a humanity, a sincerity, a feeling of duty, a dignity and pride, of which our ancestors knew nothing. How do you explain this contradiction? I sometimes ask myself if the reason may not be this: That once upon a time, when history was off the track" (he smiled as he said the words), "religion and, to some small extent, certain philosophies also, tried to impose models and rules of personal morality, to teach every man and every woman in every class, though of course in a different degree, to compare themselves every now and then with those models and representations of perfection, to search their own consciences, to recognise their own vices and defects. Nowadays there is no time for all that. Man is fully occupied in plundering the earth, or in amusing or bullying his fellows. Even if he had time to collect his thoughts, where is the authority nowadays which could impose the model upon him? So to-day every individual conscience is supreme and autonomous. She proposes to herself the model in which to mirror herself; consequently she sees herself as fair and perfect as an Adonis. If we could dive down to-day into the depths of every man's soul, we should find every

one sincerely believing himself an incomparable model, a real *vas electionis*, an angel complete but for the wings. Do you remember the beginning of Rousseau's *Confessions?* Where he turns to God, and asks Him to assemble round Him the whole of the human race, and to bid every one empty at His feet the sack full of his own misdeeds and his own merits: '*Puis qu'un seul te dise, s'il l'ose: Je fus meilleur que cet homme-là*'? Rousseau is indeed the master of our times. Every one of us would be ready to repeat before the Almighty this by no means modest apostrophe, even Mr. Feldmann. You may rest assured that he too is honestly and firmly persuaded that, if he has taken to himself a mistress and if he does want to leave his wife in the lurch, the fault is his wife's, all hers, and hers alone, because she has done or has not done something or other, goodness knows what. Tried to poison him, for instance! Everybody nowadays thinks himself perfect. Consequently, whatever wrong he does or is done to him, it is always some one else's fault, never his own. Everybody always considers himself ill-treated, and never considers himself in the wrong, so that there is no horror he is n't ready to lay at the door of any one who offends or molests him. Naturally, with the best intentions in the world, he cannot help being a merciless scourge to his fellows in the first place and to himself in the next. Link two human beings together; a weak, conceited, selfish, suspicious, priggish, and sensual man, and a beautiful, intelligent, artistic, virtuous, but frank, obstinate, and impatient woman. Give them one of those great modern fortunes which make men so exacting and overbearing; and heaven only knows what may not happen in times like ours. They will love each other

passionately, so long as her beauty excites in him that obscure and powerful instinct with which nature has endowed us poor mortals. But, even in the midst of their transports, every day will be marked by suspicions, quarrels, and mutual accusations, of cowardice, may be, and even of poison. Only about trivial matters, you may say, such as pictures, furniture, or entertaining. But who can measure the effect which the most innocent act, gesture, or remark may produce on a man or a woman who has drawn up at the dictation of his or her own sensibility and vanity, a fantastic Magna Charta of his or her individual rights? No doubt a long time may pass before both recognise that they hate much more than they love each other; and each will impute to the other the jars and discords which arise. But one fine, or rather, dirty day, another man or another woman appears on the scene; and then . . . Catastrophe! The veil is torn aside, and the one who wishes to change bed-fellows discovers a thousand reasons for no longer loving, and for leaving, the other. How many marriages come to grief without any one being able to decide which is right and which is wrong, the husband or the wife; because nowadays no one can say what are the respective rights and duties of each!"

"But, Rosetti," I interrupted, "you are echoing what the doctor said: Earth is a sewer, and it would want a Michelangelesque broom to clear it out. We must have some limits, even at the cost of destroying the machines."

Rosetti continued to pace up and down in thought; then said suddenly:

"No, no! I know it, the moral decadence of our times is as much a subject for lament as the æsthetic. And I am not prepared to deny that the large amount

of liberty allowed to man has not produced many inconveniences, as much in the practical as in the intellectual life; that the moral disorder of which we are witnesses is not itself a product of that liberty. But if we had not given man this liberty, if we had not liberated him from the limits which imprisoned him in the past, do you think that we could have demanded of him such an immense effort of work, have imposed on him so crushing a burden of civic duties? The men of the limited civilisations worked much less hard. If we are to protest as you do against our times, we must assert that history has been off the track. And what man has the right to assert this? The limited civilisations created arts, religions, philosophies, literatures, laws, morals which are even now the basis of our social life. Who would dare to say that they wasted their time, even if, in so doing, they had to renounce the treasures of the earth and the dominion over nature? We have conquered these treasures; we have conquered the earth and subdued nature. Who would dare to say that this great enterprise was not worth accomplishing, even at the cost of overturning so many limits? It is true that in doing so we have in some degree lost the faculty of limiting ourselves; and then——"

He paused for a moment, then added:

"No, no; I 'm an old man now. This is the last voyage I shall make between the two worlds."

I made a gesture of protest. He took no notice of it, but went on:

"I 'm an old man, and this is my last voyage. But I have been young, like every one else. . . . And for the last couple of days, here at the end of my last voyage, after saying a last farewell to the new world

in which I made my fortune so many years ago, I have been thinking of my first voyage in 1865. I made it in a paddle steamer—a regular sea-tortoise—which started from Havre, I remember. If only Signor Vazquez knew! Heavens, how the world has changed! It makes me giddy to think of it. Has there really passed only time enough to see one generation grow old? Or have I lived the life of two or three generations? No; I too have lived between the two worlds without going mad—at least I hope so; and I too have taken part in this great new achievement of our times, the conquest of the earth, as Alverighi calls it. I have built railways, I have ploughed up tracts of land; I have trained engineers, and how often have I too uttered my shout of triumph over the ruins of the crumbling limits which encumber the world! For tell me: If man had not dared to overstep all the limits within which the ancient civilisations kept him prisoner, if he had not had the courage to risk making the world uglier, in order to make it bigger, to risk exposing human nature to a hundred corruptions, new as well as old, in order to infuse into it its unflagging energy, should we be travelling so quickly, comfortably, and safely in this ship? Should we have conquered the world with our railways, and the air with our aeroplanes? Should we be so powerful, so wise, so just and human, so sure of ourselves and of our future? But the years slipped by, grey hairs began to appear, the ardent desires of youth died down. Gradually, as I grew older and thought more about these things, I began to see them from the reverse side. Do not beauty, truth, and virtue originate in a limitation? What is a state but a system of laws, a religion but a system of precepts,—that is to say, each a system

of limits! And is not God the most august and the most ancient of Limits? Are not Pain, Shame, Honour, Metre, and Grammar, limits? And what is a man's fatherland but a limit, an ideal limit and a tangible limit, represented by a frontier? And, after all, what is love? Are you prepared to say whether love is the most tragic or the most frivolous of human passions? It depends on the limits; for there is no human passion which lends itself more readily to contradictory judgments. Confine it within rigid and semi-sacred limits—the limit of honour, of sin, or of duty—and at once it becomes filled with scruples and with passions, which sometimes exalt it and make it a thing divine, sometimes infect it with suspicions and anger. Remove these limits; and what is love but a pleasure intense but brief, a rose we must gather while we may? And why, when nature has bestowed on us this fountain of pleasure, need we ourselves turn it into a waterspout? Does the lapse of a man or a woman shake the universe to its foundations? The man who to-day despairs and prays for death, because his loved one flouts him, will laugh at himself and his folly, six months hence, when another woman has caught his fancy. So you have only to abolish all the limits upon earth, and man will no longer be able to say whether love is a duty or a whim. Mrs. Feldmann's troubles have come at a lucky moment, not to prove to us that the world is corrupt and depraved, but to remind us of a fact of which we had rather lost sight in our discussions: that there is lacking to modern times not only a law of internal discipline—like a man's honour or his oath,—but also a sexual morality; for all the rules which still to some small extent govern our customs have been handed down to us from the

times of a limited civilisation, and have lost their strength according as men have lost the spirit of limitation. Mrs. Feldmann protests that her husband has no right to drive her out of his house, because she has not betrayed him. Mr. Feldmann on the contrary is persuaded that he has this right. Who will decide between them? We all wander about looking for the limits in the place where we think we ought to find them. But we cannot find them; there is not a sign of them. No; I cannot understand how an epoch, which cannot give a decisive answer to the question whether New York is beautiful or ugly, because it acknowledges no authority or criterion of judgment, can have any authority for saying to a man and woman, 'Live peaceably together, do not wrong one another, be tolerant of each other's faults, and produce children'."

I agreed that it was true that the State, for all its power, could not impose fruitfulness on a married couple. For that a spiritual authority was necessary. How was such an authority to be constituted in a society which was intolerant of limits, without upsetting it altogether? I explained this difficulty to Rosetti, adding that sterility was the canker of our society.

But he had no time to answer me. Just then a steward came and fetched my wife and me away to see to the luggage.

"I must go and look after mine too," said Rosetti.

We were just going, when Rosetti suddenly said:

"You see, the Church was not entirely in the wrong when she refused to canonise Columbus because he had committed adultery. Our epoch is ever ready to sink personal vices in extrinsic merits; and they have their good reasons for doing so. But there are good grounds for maintaining the opposite principle. Christopher

Columbus discovered America, it is true. He overstepped one limit. But on his return he took it into his head to overstep another, with that girl. . . . What was her name?"

"Beatrice Henriquez."

"After America, Señorita Henriquez: two limits. Come! Is n't that rather too much, even for Columbus?"

From that moment the little society on board the *Cordova* began to break up. Everything was turned upside down by the excitement of our impending arrival. Every one was rushing about the ship in a state of wild agitation. The most excited of all was Mrs. Feldmann, who, with Lisetta's help, was getting her numerous trunks ready, preparatory to making a dash for the Paris express.

We all quickly swallowed our dinners, with our thoughts full of land and the morrow. After dinner the agitation and rushing about began again. A great deal of whispering went on among the less educated passengers, towards nine o'clock, when Mrs. Feldmann could be descried from the deck, seated in the dining-room in consultation with the chief steward and paying her bill.

"How much will she tip him?"

"A thousand francs?"

"Do you think so, now that the millions have vanished?"

"And what about the present? Is she going to give it to us?" added the São Paulo doctor's wife suddenly.

"You can whistle for that!" said the fair Genoese.

"But Lisetta told me she would," replied the other.

"Like mistress, like maid!" answered the Genoese.

"Lisetta is a liar, and is making fun of us. But I should like to know how much she tipped him."

At that moment the steward made a profound bow to Mrs. Feldmann, who went out. Judging by his face, I should have said that he was quite satisfied; but the Genoese thought not.

"Look at his face. . . . Is n't he discontented?"

"Greatness and Decadence!" murmured Cavalcanti who was looking on with me.

About ten o'clock we saw some lights.

"Marseilles," said some.

"The islands of Hyères," said others.

Anyhow, there was France. Far over the water shone the lights, welcoming the travellers back to Europe. I saw Mrs. Feldmann, with her face turned towards the night, intent on looking at the lights. I went up to her, and, as she turned, I saw that her eyes were red and glistening with tears.

Every one turned in early. I slept but little. We all woke early, as if that would help us to get to land quicker, and I went out on deck about seven o'clock. The morning was grey and cloudy. Already we could see in the distance Cape Mele, and the hills of Liguria dotted with houses. Italy! What a joy it was to let our eyes dwell on that prospect, which we had anticipated so eagerly for two long weeks! The luggage having been already seen to, we had nothing more to do, and could stand chatting on the deck in the cold morning air, idle, restless, and impatient, looking anxiously for a glimpse of the San Benigno light. Only Cavalcanti was missing. He had preferred meditating on the myth of Apollo and Prometheus the previous day to looking after his luggage; so he was condemned to his cabin on that last morning.

I found Rosetti all ready to go ashore. We walked up and down together, looking at the land and discussing America, Italy, Bellaria, our plans, and the voyage which was just coming to an end. I thanked him for myself and Cavalcanti for his interesting conversation, and said that he had given us food for thought for many a day. But he stopped me before I had finished, and, looking at me with a smile, said:

"What do you take me for? A philosopher? I assure you I am not. . . . Everything I have said can be compressed into one extremely simple little formula: We must not wish for everything, not for every beauty, every truth, or every good. We must know how to limit ourselves, because we are limited beings. Do you think a new Plato is required to discover and publish a truth like that? or to perceive that happiness, the greatest of goods, as Aristotle said, the great fixer of limits, depends on a rule of such elementary simplicity?"

"I should think so!" I interrupted. "Nowadays men have entirely forgotten this truth; simple though it is and ought to be."

"Because we have discovered America and invented machines? Because we have become rich, wise, and powerful? Because philosophers love to stick their noses into things which don't concern them? But do you think that trifles like that are enough to upset the equilibrium of the universe? Life is a simpler and clearer thing than many present-day philosophers think. Look, for instance: we have spent two weeks in a lively and confused discussion, and we have scoured earth and sky in search of arguments to prove whether it is better to make money or researches, to cultivate fields or to create works of art or to invent machines;

up to what point one can and ought to desire riches, to seek for truth, to long for beauty; how we ought to understand progress; whether we are more virtuous or more vicious than our ancestors. . . . Well? Did we set out to discuss the universe in all its branches, or one extremely simple question, which any one with a grain of common-sense can solve in the twinkling of an eye; I mean, the question what are the relations between Art, Morality, Truth, and Utility or Practice, or whatever you like to call it?"

"Heaven forfend! No, not the universe—only the simple question. But that question, which seems to you so extremely simple, involves the universe in all its branches."

"Do you think so? I, on the contrary, repeat that it is an extremely simple question, even though it does seem so obscure to many philosophers. Does not Life solve it unhesitatingly every day? Why, of course, Art, Morality, and the rest of them are reciprocal limits, don't you see? For instance: the sense of the Beautiful may keep Morality back from certain unæsthetical excesses of asceticism; Morality may divert Art from certain harmful subjects; Utility may keep Truth in check, reminding men that *toute verité n'est pas bonne à dire* or prevent Art and Morality from becoming ends in themselves and dishumanising themselves; and so on."

"Very well. But when, how, and at what point ought one of these to limit the other? Who or what will fix the limit?"

"The Will. The 'great will' of the nations and civilisations. What is history but the everlasting effort of will to find new equilibria and more perfect limitations between the diverse elements of universal

Life? You need feel no misgivings. Perform your task faithfully and conscientiously, without expecting too much from it, without taking too seriously to heart the disillusionments it may bring you, without turning to look back too often; and wait! Some day or other the long-expected act of will will burst forth. If you ask me, Whence? I answer: Do we know whence comes the impulse which drives the stars round their orbits?"

"It may be so; but meanwhile the modern world is plunging into anarchy. And, if anarchy does not frighten you I may add that it is threatened with sterility. You yourself discovered the other day the decisive argument against our unlimited civilisation and in favour of the old limited civilisations; and that argument is sterility—the inevitable effect of the decay of every moral authority."

Rosetti thought a moment, and then said hesitatingly, and as if he were speaking to himself:

"And suppose that sterility were preparing the way for the reconquest of quality and the revival of the limits? In the ancient limited civilisations, did not the population increase but slowly, or even actually decrease? If human beings continue to spring up in all directions, can we hope to refine that great coarse lump, modern civilisation? Shall we not be obliged to go on inventing machines, devastating whole territories, sweeping away every limit, and saying that speed, even coupled with inferiority, of manufacture, spells progress?"

Shouts interrupted our conversation. Some of the passengers thought they could see Genoa. A steward brought Rosetti his bill, and he went off with him.

I heard the fair Genoese say to her friends in a contemptuous voice:

"Do you know how much she gave in tips? Two hundred francs!"

The jeweller was indignant. The others did not express any opinion, except the São Paulo doctor's wife, who said timidly:

"I wonder how many of us have given as much in proportion!"

But the Genoese answered venomously:

"I suppose you 've had that present you were talking about, have n't you? Don't spend it all at once!"

Alas! The Mrs. Feldmann bubble had been sadly pricked.

At this point Alverighi came up, puffing and blowing, and saying:

"How difficult it is to breathe in the Mediterranean! Directly one gets out of the Atlantic, one feels how confined and stagnant it is, does n't one?"

Then he pointed to the distant mountains of Liguria, dotted with little houses.

"To think," said he, "that every one of those poor wretches who are struggling to make two ends meet on those barren rocks could become a millionaire, if he emigrated to Argentina! Europe is full of idiots."

I answered laughingly that it would not be much fun if every one became a millionaire; for if they did, who would there be to clean our boots?

But he took no notice, and went on:

"We have discussed perfectly useless subjects for two whole weeks, Ferrero; shall we talk seriously now for once? Would you like your children to become millionaires one day? Buy land in the province of Mendoza, like us, or in the province of Cordova."

And he went on to explain various speculations to me, concluding:

"Buy, buy; now 's the time. Buy, and don't think any more about your money. You 'll make thousands while you 're asleep."

I answered that I knew nothing about such things, whereupon he said with a laugh:

"Are you too a convert to Vedantism? I own I want to make my hundred millions. What else am I put into the world for?"

Meanwhile a white patch began to show up in the distance—Genoa. Gradually it grew larger and more distinct. A general exchange of farewells began, between Cavalcanti, Alverighi, the Admiral, Mrs. Feldmann, Signor Vazquez, Rosetti, and us three. While we were thus occupied, Signor and Signora Yriondo suddenly appeared, the former looking pale and thin, and as if he still had some fever about him.

"*Cose da pazzissimi*,"—muttered the doctor. "It 's regular murder!"

But the Signora was proud to be able to show us what miracles "Christian Science" could work, and told us that getting out of bed was an act of energy on her husband's part which would finally shatter the illusion of sickness.

We soon reached the mouth of the harbour. The ship slackened speed as we entered it. We could see the quay in the distance, black and crowded with people. While we slowly drifted up to it and began to make fast, handkerchiefs were waved, and signals and greetings exchanged with friends on shore. Every one on the crowded decks seemed to have some one waiting for him, to give him the latest news of home and friends. At last the ship came to rest, the gangways were run out, and the port authorities and the company's agents came on board.

I went to take leave of Captain Mombello and to thank him and the Italian Lloyd representative for our comfortable voyage. Then we all, my wife, my boy, Rosetti, and myself, left the ship.

THE END

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